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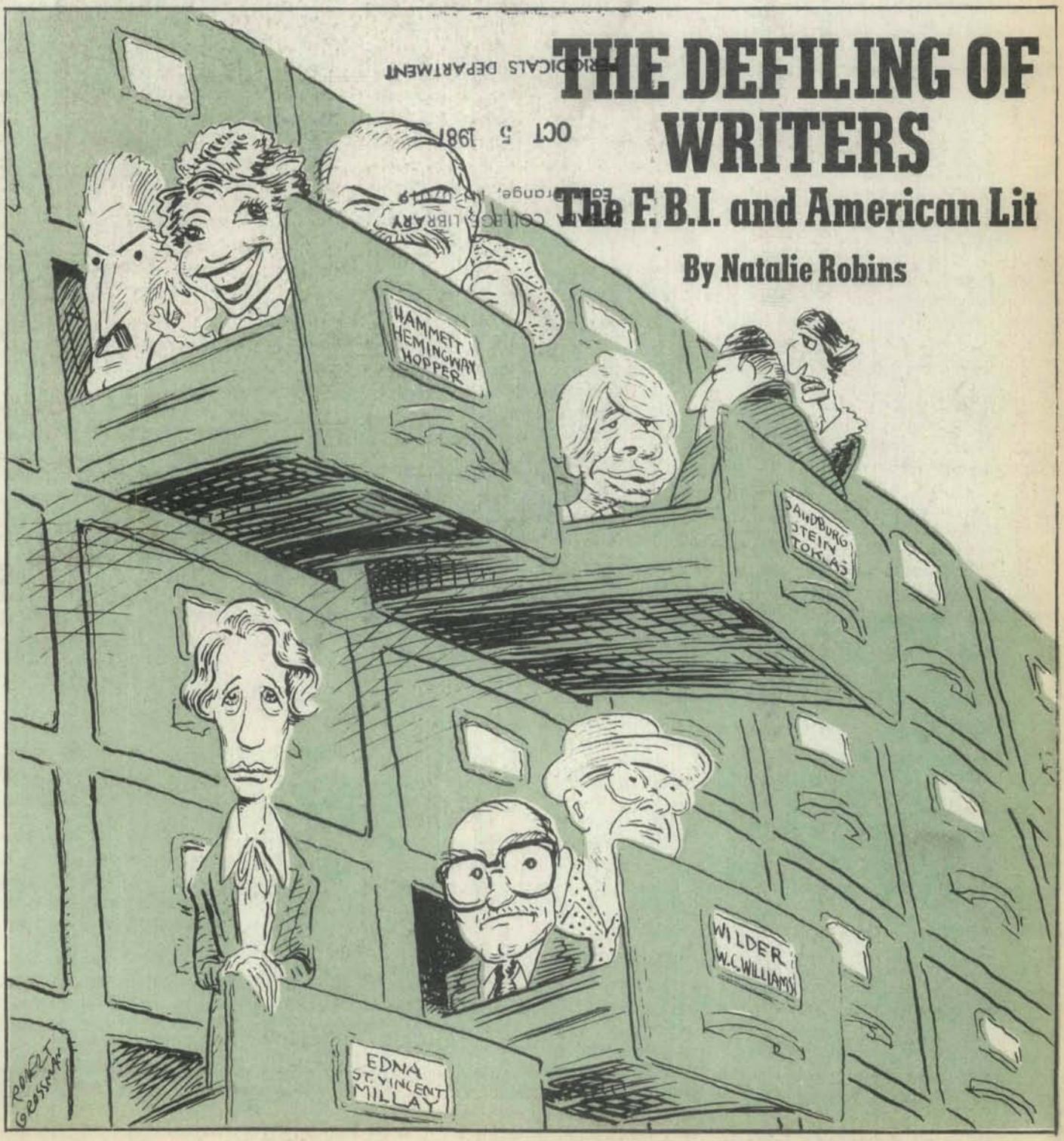
The F.B.I. and American Lit

By Natalie Robins



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LETTERS.

THE GRAYING OF AMERICA

Philadelphia

Daniel Callahan's article "Limiting Health Care for the Old," in the August 15/22 *Nation*, is so full of misconceptions and bad philosophy that it is hard to correct the record.

First he sets up a straw man, then proceeds to beat him to death. He says that the use of heroic measures to extend life, e.g., heart transplants, liver transplants, etc., are so expensive and will increase the cost of medical care so greatly that it will become an unbearable burden to society. He should be aware that the elderly are not advocates of heroic measures. There is a big movement, which the Gray Panthers have been promoting, for death with dignity and the use of living wills.

Instead, Callahan should explore the real causes of escalating medical costs: the absence of control over doctors' fees or private insurance and for-profit hospitals, with their high administrative and advertising costs. The basic defect is the treatment of health care as just another commodity in the marketplace. Those countries that have recognized health care as a human right and established national health systems have done better than we in supplying good care and containing costs. Only when we have established a rational, fair system can we begin to take up the questions of medical ethics involved in limiting certain procedures for the elderly and others in our society.

Finally, a word about Callahan's philosophy on aging. To him old age should be a period of preparation for death, a time when one becomes reconciled to that idea. We would like to counterpose to this philosophy of death a philosophy of life. We Gray Panthers, and most active older persons, view old age as a phase in which people continue to lead useful, happy lives to the fullest extent possible and do not wait around to die.

Abe Bloom
Vice Chair
National Gray Panther Executive Committee

ESKIMO WALK

Beacon, N.Y.

Shortage of hospital space? Who should live and who shouldn't? We ain't seen nothin' yet. As medical technology gets fancier and fancier, more and more hard choices will be pushed on us.

In a New Mexico graveyard was a little wooden cross for a cowboy killed in a stampede. The epitaph read, "He done his damndest." Really, isn't that the best epitaph anyone could have? My father went that way—at age 92. Fell down stairs. Out like a light. I'm told that in ancient times amongst the Eskimos a grandparent might simply walk out into the cold to freeze to death.

And in times to come, maybe it will be considered the norm for us older folks to make up our own minds as to when we want to let the young folks carry on without us. That seems much more sensible to me than to have the decision made by some stranger—a technician with a lot of fancy machinery who could prolong the heartbeats for a few more days if there's enough money to pay for the equipment.

This is entirely aside from the scandal that our government spends billions of dollars on guns and bombs and keeps cutting back health care and health education. *Pete Seeger*

WHEN DUTY CALLS . . .

New York City

The lead article in the August 15/22 *Nation*, wishfully entitled "Limiting Health Care for the Old," wasted a great deal of space beating around the bush. Richard Lamm, former Governor of Colorado, made the point far more concisely when he advised the elderly ill: "You've got a duty to die and get out of the way." *John L. Hess*

PRORATED AGING

Brooklyn

I take issue with both the ageism and incomplete examination of the issues expressed in Daniel Callahan's article.

To assume that the elderly may use up only that percentage of medical costs that is equal to their percentage of the total population is a misuse of statistics. We don't insist the entire education budget be prorated over all cohorts in the population.

Does his projection of future health costs take the expense of fighting acquired immune deficiency syndrome into account? AIDS is not a disease of the elderly, yet we do not begrudge that expense.

Let's examine the costs of battling cancer and heart disease and how medical funds are allotted. What portion of the "war on cancer" has gone for prevention and what for enriching drug companies? Reducing cigarette smoking would decrease the costs of treating related cancers, yet the government continues to subsidize tobacco farmers. We subsidize artificial hearts and transplants; however, it might be both more productive and healthier to cut down on fats and cholesterol. But we let the dairy and meat industries prevent an educational campaign.

We promote fancy technologies because they are profitable. Good health for all apparently is not. I suggest you focus on those issues rather than attack the elderly.

Ruth Sperber

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF

Los Angeles

My experiences as a physician validate Daniel Callahan's vision of modern medicine. However, the solution to an impending crisis in health care does not rest in Callahan's suggested rearrangement of priorities and the philosophical approach to aging, illness and death. Americans are hooked on technology and the extension of life. American physicians and the medical-industrial complex (pharmaceuticals, supplies, hospitals, medical equipment) are addicted to the ever growing revenues afforded by impractical applications of technology to the hopelessly ill and dying elderly. The mere mention of cost control and "limiting health care" sends self-righteous medical-care providers into orbit. My wealthiest physician colleagues express great outrage that anyone would challenge the value of goods or services the government obtains from the $75 million Medicare budget.

But much of the money spent in Medicare is money wasted on unnecessary tests, unneeded hospitalization and dangerous drugs. Most doctors know it. But most doctors and hospitals still profit from these inefficient if not fraudulent activities. In my Los Angeles offices, I have provided the best care for the most ill patients at nearly half the cost of my fellow physicians across the street. Study after study demonstrates that cost-controlled, managed medical care reduces expenses way below the national average without a reduction in quality of services, health or longevity of patients. Payments to physicians and hospitals are, in fact, rather arbitrary and unrelated to either the amount of work performed or the quality of performance. Any industry run in this fashion deserves the embarrassment of bankruptcy.

From time to time Callahan may wonder if his writing ultimately produces a measurable impact. As a manager of a large medical group, and participant in the recent government effort to reduce Medicare costs, I find his article both important and inspirational. Although I cannot agree with all of Callahan's solutions, I am grateful for his perspective on the problems of "limiting health care for the old," as it gives me additional, much-needed strength in my efforts (so far successful) to produce more medical benefits from less money. *Bruce P. Barnett, M.D.*

CALLAHAN REPLIES

Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

I wish I could believe that affordable health care for the elderly could be had through greater efficiency, more emphasis on preventive medicine and a reduction in corporate profits and the fees of doctors. No doubt all of those measures would help, and they surely ought to be pursued. American medicine is enormously wasteful and is too much driven by the profit motive. I also, as it happens, fully support the drive for national health insurance.

But I doubt that those measures will work unless accompanied by a no-less-strong willingness on the part of the elderly—and those like myself who will soon be elderly—not to pursue increasingly long lives. My doubt stems from a number of reasons.

First, while it is admirable that the Gray Panthers are promoting living wills and

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EDITORIALS.

Casey's Secret

For some mysterious reason—perhaps an atavistic will to believe the best of one's leaders despite consistent evidence to the contrary—succeeding generations of Americans have been shocked to learn of the secret wars and subversive campaigns conducted in their name by the intelligence community. The press usually messengers the bad news.

In the 1960s, *Ramparts* magazine pulled together the hidden history of Central Intelligence Agency infiltration and exploitation of student organizations, triggering similar investigations into labor, cultural and charitable groups by major newspapers. In the 1970s, as a tidal bore of investigative journalism joined the mainstream, Seymour Hersh of *The New York Times* and others debriefed rusticated master spies to detail a litany of international mischief and mayhem later confirmed and expanded in Senate testimony before the Church committee. In this decade, the newspapers and newsmagazines had much of the Iran/*contra* story before the Congressional committees mangled most of it, and now Bob Woodward is hot off the presses with a new book, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987*, providing even more details of the complex web of relationships that surround and inform the simple equations of weapons for hostages and profits for wars. As before, people in power swear that it can't be true, and peers in

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the press pummel the messenger for the bad news.

Thus Flora Lewis in *The Times* of September 29 chiding Woodward for holding his hot news until the Iran/*contra* committees finished their work. Thus the White House press office denying Woodward's representation of the late William Casey's words and works. Thus leading members of those committees expressing disbelief at the revelations. What they worry about are questions of scoop and style. For if any of them cared about the substance of the reports, there would already be an unavoidable clamor for new hearings, another independent counsel and bills of impeachment.

As Woodward himself told Mike Wallace on *60 Minutes*, the C.I.A.'s security is so spotty and casual that any reporter with half a wit can elude it, if not on the first try then easily on the next. Working with a confederate, probably within the Georgetown hospital where Casey slept out his final months in semivegetative oblivion, Woodward managed to slip into the room of the Director of Central Intelligence and conduct some kind of interview in less time than it will take you to read two pages of this magazine. Who was surprised, then, to hear that Casey "nodded" in apparent assent to Woodward's leading question about his knowledge of the fund diversion scheme, or that the barely conscious old man with a brain tumor muttered something that sounded like, "I believed." The lowliest cub on *The Washington Post* could interview a zucchini in a supermarket and get the same results. Oliver North told Congress months ago that Casey was in on the scam.

Woodward's reporting is strong when it comes to Casey's covert ops. The man took it upon himself to conduct military operations against Nicaragua, to destabilize Italian politics so as to avoid an electoral victory for the left, to bug a diplomat's office, to bribe the chief of a Moslem movement and to set up death squads and assassination teams with the help of foreign rulers. He got the President to issue a blanket order of approval for the worst of such deeds. The details are disgusting, but none of it should come as a shock. Casey's crimes continued the long tradition of secret strategies, executive actions and deniable dirty tricks that have characterized America's conduct of counterrevolution and the cold war since Truman intervened in Greece in 1947. As it turns out, dead men *do* tell tales, but their lessons will be lost until the policies they pursued are changed and institutions they commanded reformed.

Weinberger's War

An extraordinary remark was made by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger on ABC's *This Week With David Brinkley* on September 27. Though it got little attention in most newspapers, it cast an alarming light on what may be the Reagan Administration's real war aims in the Persian Gulf, from which the Secretary was speaking. Weinberger expressed hope for an arms embargo against Iran that "would gradually dry up Iran's capability of fighting." Then he added, "Short of that, I think, perhaps on a longer range basis, there will need to be a totally different kind of government in Iran, because no one can deal with an irrational, fanatical government of the kind that they have now."

This deserves attention in two different debates now going on about the Persian Gulf. One is in the U.N. Security Council, where U.S. demands for an arms embargo against Iran have been sidetracked for diplomatic attempts to bring about a cease-fire. The other is the Congressional debate over the War Powers Act and the bill sponsored by Senators Robert Byrd and Sam Nunn to give Congress veto power over the Kuwaiti tanker reflagging program, which has made the United States Iraq's ally rather than a mediator.

The revelation of Weinberger's thinking will hardly make the United Nations' efforts easier. If Iran thinks that the goal of the United States is not peace but the overthrow of the Khomeini regime, Teheran may feel that it is being driven into a corner where it must fight for its very existence.

On the other hand, the remark will not make it easier for the Administration to convince Congress to keep its hands off its giddy gulf policies. For Weinberger's remark implies that we are engaged not in peacemaking but in the first stages of a protracted and costly war. It would no longer be a question of Congress' right, under the War Powers Act, to impose restraint on military activity in an area where hostilities are "imminent." The Secretary is charting a course that undercuts the Constitution, which gives Congress alone the right to declare war. These provisions reflect several centuries of British struggle to take the war power away from the crown and rest it in Parliament. This is relevant again in the age of our imperial presidency.

Was Weinberger mischief-making—trying to make the Iranian regime all the more suspicious and resistant to U.N. diplomacy? Or was he, under the pressure of a heated discussion on TV, blurting out the truth about the Reagan Administration's intentions? The appropriate Senate committees ought to ask him for a fuller explanation.

Until now Congress has been offered diverse and often disingenuous explanations of what the Administration is doing in the gulf. It was said to be protecting the world's oil supplies, but then why tilt to Iraq, which began the tanker war and is again escalating it? It claimed to be defending freedom of navigation, but then why were we not escorting Iranian as well as Kuwaiti vessels? Iran is wholly dependent on the gulf for its shipping and, unlike Iraq and Saudi Arabia, has no pipelines to the open seas. The United States said it was trying to keep Iran from falling under Soviet influence. Then why object when the Russians began to escort Kuwaiti vessels? What better way to drive a wedge between Teheran and Moscow?

Britain has an arms embargo against both Iran and Iraq. That would seem a model for an evenhanded U.N. effort to stop the war, rather than the one-sided embargo against Iran that the United States favors. This would reward Iraq, which was the aggressor.

Arms embargoes historically have proven as porous as a sieve. They escalate the profits of the world's arms traders. A more effective way to hit Iran would be to blockade the

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entrance to the Persian Gulf. But that would bring a sharp rise in the price of oil and cut off a main source of supply for Japan as well as the West. There seems to be no reasonable alternative but to pursue the search through the United Nations for a cease-fire. That always takes time and patience, even in a labor dispute, much less a mortal combat between nations. The Reagan Administration is much too hasty and frenetic, as if it is in a panic lest the forthcoming Congressional report on the Iran/*contra* affair and indictments by special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh will do fresh damage to Reagan's reputation. A military crisis with Iran would come in handy.

Weinberger says the Iranian regime is too fanatical and irrational to be dealt with. Was it any less so when Reagan was wooing Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini with pastry and a Bible? The execution of Mehdi Hashemi in Teheran recently is a reminder that but for his faction's whistle-blowing leak to a Lebanese newspaper last November, we might still be selling arms to Iran at inflated prices to carry on a secret war in Central America. We already need to be reminded that the final twist in this corkscrew intrigue was that we were then publicly urging our allies to embargo arms for Iran as a terrorist state. That was only eleven short months ago.

Maybe Teheran sees the execution as an olive branch to Reagan for the damage Hashemi caused him and the renewed headaches fresh revelations may soon bring. I.F. STONE

Cool With Coolidge

Conservatives are growing increasingly frustrated in their efforts to find a presidential candidate who will continue Ronald Reagan's policies and leadership style. They have never much liked the frontrunner, Vice President George Bush, and fear liberal tendencies in Senator Robert Dole, the leading challenger. The other candidates simply aren't electable—especially if you assume, as most Republican activists do, that the Democratic nominee will be Mario Cuomo.

Calvin Coolidge is an obvious way out of the woods. Reagan admires his brand of politics and can be expected to support him. As a former President, Coolidge plainly has the experience for the job. Voters will learn that he took over the scandal-ridden Harding Administration, calmed Congress and restored faith in government.

The only barrier to a Coolidge election is that he is dead, a circumstance that has far less political than legal significance. That's where Robert Bork comes in. Ultimately, the Supreme Court will have to decide whether a dead man can serve as President; should Bork be confirmed, he will hold the decisive swing vote. In a 1985 speech, Bork insisted that in matters such as "the powers of the President," we are "ruled by men long dead." For him, then, the constitutional question will turn on the original intent of the framers.

Article II of the Constitution restricts eligibility for the highest office to those persons who "have attained to the age of thirty-five years." Significantly, nothing in the text or debates over this provision mentions death; the clear intent of the framers was to insure that the President be of sufficient maturity to meet the demands of the office. Coolidge was born in 1872, making him both eligible and the most mature candidate in the race.

Constitutionalists like Professor Laurence H. Tribe of Harvard University might argue lamely that the Twenty-fifth Amendment renders Coolidge unfit to serve. It provides that "in the case of the . . . death" of the President, the Vice President becomes President. A strict constructionist like Bork, however, would immediately grasp that this language pertains only to death of a President while in office. Coolidge died in 1933, four years after the end of his term.

Another constitutional provision, the Twenty-second Amendment, actually supports the Coolidge claim. The amendment limits Presidents who serve more than two years of a predecessor's term to a single term. Coolidge, however, became President in 1923 (when Warren Harding died), was elected the following year and did not run in 1928.

Liberal academics can be expected to mount a challenge on grounds other than the constitutional text. They will claim that as men of the Enlightenment, the framers intended, despite absence of supporting language, that the President not be dead. But nothing in the deliberations in Philadelphia provides a shred of evidence for this position, which smacks of the read-the-Constitution-in-light-of-your-own-values position that Bork rejects.

To block Coolidge, Democratic lawyers will argue that he cannot be elected without his consent because a dead man has a right to privacy that cannot be abridged, even by a majority of the voters. This contention, of course, flies in the face of Bork's view that the right to privacy is a chimera, extrajudicially created by Warren-era Justices. Bork can be expected to compare Coolidge's right to privacy to the right of the couple seeking to use contraceptive devices or the right of a woman to have an abortion.

To be sure, we will never know how Bork will vote until the case arises. Presidents have often been disappointed by the performance of their nominees, and Bork's changes of position are already well known. He now accepts that the poll-tax case was correctly decided and that the 1964 statute prohibiting racial discrimination in public accommodations was within the power of Congress. He has apparently abandoned the view that the First Amendment covers only political speech.

Unfortunately from the Democrats' standpoint, for the Court to rule against the Coolidge claim it would have to hold that death has a special constitutional significance. Bork has rejected that view. He sides with Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Justices Byron White, Sandra Day O'Connor and Antonin Scalia in holding that the Court, for example, has no business closely regulating state capital-punishment laws. Their opinions make clear that death isn't of greater constitutional significance than any other penalty imposed by the law. By analogy, Coolidge will be no lesser President simply because he is dead. MICHAEL MELTSNER

Michael Meltsner teaches constitutional litigation at Northeastern University School of Law.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Consider, if you will, the figure of George Shultz. Because he is not, on the face of it, either an ideological fanatic or a pathological liar, he does duty as the official moderate of the Reagan Administration. His chief talent is that of being absent when hair-raising and illegal decisions are taken and of remaining adequately uninformed about the nature of such decisions until it is far too late. His chubby finger seems permanently moistened and held up to detect the way of the wind. As the Albert Speer of the Reagan juntâ, he has garnered numberless epithets such as "statesmanlike" and "cautious."

The latest achievement of this mediocre coward is to have shifted himself on a crucial matter of U.S. foreign and domestic policy, the better to trade principle for a quiet life. When, in the course of last fall, Senators Robert Dole and Charles Grassley introduced legislation to close the Washington information office of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Shultz took a reasonably diplomatic line. In a letter to Jack Kemp, the opportunistic sponsor of the same bill on the House side, Shultz wrote that as long as the office "regularly files reports with the Department of Justice on its activities as an agent of a foreign organization, complies with all other relevant US laws and is staffed by Americans or legal resident aliens, it is entitled to operate under the protection provided by the First Amendment of the Constitution."

The last clause is important. It shows that the State Department understands the constitutional rights of Americans to hear all sides of an important argument. Make that "understood." On September 15 the Palestine Information Office received notice from the State Department that it would have to cease operations. This action involved a bit of legal finagling to change the status of the office from that of a foreign agent to that of a foreign mission. It served to placate the extreme right, which has been using the issue as an election-year fund-raiser. It aligned the United States with that tiny minority of countries that refuses to recognize the P.L.O. at any level. And it abridged the right of Americans to receive information from the Palestinian side of the Middle East question. Not a bad day's work.

In an attempt to cover its retreat, State says that the move follows the readmittance of Abu Abbas to the P.L.O. and is thus justified as a blow against our old friend Terrorism. This is pretty feeble reasoning. The extreme right and the rejectionist element among the Israel lobby have been pushing to shut the P.L.O. office since long before the Achille Lauro hijacking and the Leon Klinghoffer atrocity. Moreover, the formal presence of a P.L.O. bureau does not imply U.S. support for anything any of its ex-members or members may do. And there has never been the least allegation of illegal or violent activity made against any member or associate of the Palestine Information Office.

Morton Halperin of the American Civil Liberties Union, which has decided to fight State's latest edict, puts the domestic objection very well:

> It is clearly a violation of the rights of free speech and association to bar American citizens from acting as agents seeking to advance the political ideology of any organization, even if that organization is based abroad. Notwithstanding criminal acts in which the PLO may have been involved, a ban on advocacy of all components of the PLO's efforts will not withstand constitutional scrutiny. Restrictions on speech are justified only if there is a close connection between the speech and the imminent commission of unlawful acts, a standard not even closely approximated by the sweeping language of this new legislation.

The State Department says in private that its clumsy bureaucratic move against the information office is an attempt to dilute the Dole-Grassley and Kemp bills, which also seek to close the P.L.O.'s permanent mission to the United Nations. This is a shifty and stupid excuse. By accepting the main principle—that there is only one legitimate side in the Middle East and that Americans must be protected from the other, illegitimate one—Shultz and his subordinates are acting as advance men for the bills.

The international aspect of the decision is hardly less absurd. By cutting off even the most tenuous contact with the P.L.O., the United States joins the club of South Africa, South Korea, Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica, which are the only other nations to take so one-dimensional a view of the conflict. In virtually every other country the Palestine Liberation Organization is recognized, not as the government of Palestine but as what it actually is: the chosen representative of the Palestinian people. No serious person has ever suggested that peace in the Middle East can be attained without the participation of the Palestinians, and no rival representative of that people exists even on paper. The attempt to deny this stubborn fact is an attempt to do something rather more deplorable—to deny the existence, and thereby negate the political and national rights, of the Palestinian people *tout court*.

The official justification for such denial is that the P.L.O. does not recognize the state of Israel and does not renounce the use of force. By that measure, the United States has no business consorting with the government of Saudi Arabia, which publishes and circulates attacks on Judaism as well as Zionism. But, of course, the Saudi regime is considered the ideal partner for the Reagan Administration's covert foreign policy. So the State Department's position on the P.L.O. is incoherent and hypocritical even by the exacting standard set over the past seven years.

In a rebarbative moment on their daily radio "debate" program, Robert Dole and Edward Kennedy recently had the following exchange:

"Ted, will you join me in sending a bipartisan message to the P.L.O.? There's just no room in this great land for international terrorists."

"Right on, Bob. If the Reagan Administration won't take away their welcome mat, Congress will."

Senator Kennedy must be the last person alive who believes that the Reagan gang needs encouragement to take a step that further poisons the country's foreign relations while restricting the rights of its citizens.

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ARTICLES.

HOOVER AND AMERICAN LIT

The Defiling Of Writers

NATALIE ROBINS

"The F.B.I. had no program of maintaining files on writers, or anyone in the communications profession, unless that individual, or individuals, concerned the subject of a possible legal violation of the law, or else some phase of intelligence under F.B.I. jurisdiction." That statement was made recently by Cartha D. DeLoach, once J. Edgar Hoover's number-three man at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

But in June 1984, after I read an item in the *New York Post* about the *San Jose Mercury News*, which had received, under the Freedom of Information Act, a secret file on John Steinbeck, I became curious about other writers who might be in the F.B.I.'s files. I assembled, more or less at random, a list of about 150 authors and sent it off to Washington. About two weeks later, someone from the F.B.I. phoned to say that under the provisions of the F.O.I.A., one may ask only for material on deceased authors and that files on the living may be requested only by their subjects. So I altered my list and sent it off again. After four months the files began arriving, and now, three years later, a total of 134 once-secret files on writers have been authorized for release to me [see box on page 368].

What is one to make of those files? Does their existence constitute conspiracy, philistine paranoia or simply a case of massive bureaucratic overkill?

An F.B.I. agent, who didn't want his identity revealed, told me, "There was no *conscious* effort aimed at writers." "Agent X," as I shall call him, continued: "Writers were considered a special group in that you wouldn't want to go out and interview them without getting approval from headquarters, because they *were* considered a sensitive group. What it really came down to was not trying to convey a feeling of duress on a writer because we didn't want it to backfire in our face. It depended upon how the writer or member of the media interpreted the visit by the F.B.I., because there's one thing I think you can say—and I've heard it said in a court of law—that the mere fact that the F.B.I. comes to talk to you, it *does* have a chilling effect: The F.B.I. or the police [are] coming to talk to you! It gives you tingles! The question, of course, becomes, Is that chilling effect so great as to constitute a violation of your individual constitutional rights? That's when it becomes, what you would say, an incorrect act."

Do those 134 dossiers represent some *unconscious* effort on the F.B.I.'s part to control writers with a "chilling effect" that really adds up to intimidation? Or is it really possible that 134 of America's most acclaimed writers are involved in "some phase of intelligence under F.B.I. jurisdiction" or that they have placed themselves in positions of "possible violations of the law." These questions are answered by the files themselves.

A very random sampling illustrates the great range of writers under suspicion and the widely different uses to which the information about them was put. The thirty-one-page file on the poet and biographer Carl Sandburg was begun in 1918, when all his notebooks and manuscripts concerning the Russian Revolution were confiscated upon his return to the United States from a trip to Sweden that he had taken under the auspices of the Newspaper Enterprise Association. (Sandburg's file, along with those of Max Eastman, John Reed and Lincoln Steffens, is among the earliest on record. The United States was still involved in World War I at that time. The year before Sandburg's file was begun the Espionage Act had been passed, and the Palmer raids would begin the year after the impounding of Sandburg's notebooks.) In a letter in Sandburg's file dated January 14, 1919, Secretary of War Newton Baker asserted,

> Mr. Sandburg, in passing the routine examination, declined to inform the government of the source of $10,000 which he carried in drafts—payable to Anteri Nuorteva, the representative in this country of the Finnish Revolutionists. . . . Mr. Sandburg further has admitted that a large portion of the revolutionary literature contained in his baggage and for which he is unable to furnish translations would, if published in the United States, violate the emergency legislation.

Sandburg's boss, in his reply to that letter, expressed outrage: "Isn't it fine for the government to treat such a man like a dog of a traitor?" Nonetheless, the F.B.I. file does confirm the story that Theodore Draper recounts (without access to the file) in his *Roots of American Communism*, in which he concludes that one of the Comintern's first couriers to the United States "had to find an intermediary. By a strange combination of circumstances, his choice fell on the famous American poet and biographer, Carl Sandburg."

The ninety-four-page file of poet Edna St. Vincent Millay was begun in 1923 (the year before Hoover became director of the Bureau). Agents had found the poet's name among those entered in a "free trip to Russia" contest sponsored by the Friends of Soviet Russia, a group that at the time was trying to raise $40,000 to buy tractors for Soviet peasants. It is staggering to consider the trouble the F.B.I. went to in looking through hundreds of lists for the names of hundreds of suspected traitors. In his 1975 book, *FBI*, Sanford Ungar wrote, "The Bureau is an inveterate clipper of newspapers, collector of photographs, and requester of transcripts."

Natalie Robins, currently at work on a book about the F.B.I.'s files on writers, to be published by William Morrow, is also the author of four books of poetry and the co-author of the 1985 Savage Grace. *She will contribute additional articles on this subject.*

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Everything was the subject of suspicion, even Millay's metaphors. Indeed, a 1939 clipping in the poet's file reports that "Miss Millay used the analogy of the mole boring under the garden in her exposition of the alien menace." And the F.B.I. harbored suspicions about a greeting card sent to Hoover because there was a Millay poem printed on it.

WHAT'S A 'FILE'?

What exactly *is* a file? At the point at which the documents reach me, each writer does have his or her own dossier—that is to say, separate pages of references that have been collected and clipped together in one folder. But in order to put those separate references together, the Federal Bureau of Investigation went through 58 million index cards. Those index cards are the key to defining what a file is; it doesn't matter whether the writer is the actual subject of an investigation or is mentioned in another subject's investigation. It is crucial to understand that to be indexed is to have a file. J. Edgar Hoover himself discovered the significance of indexing when he catalogued books for the Library of Congress right after graduating from high school. Decades later, his Bureau invented those tricky "DO NOT FILE" files, which meant that the material in them was not even indexed, and thus could be hidden.

For a researcher, one of the problems with the files occurs because, as Agent X told me, "We get conflicting information all the time, so a lot of untrue information gets recorded in our files. A lot of what the story is turns on the questions that are asked by the agent." So, if DO NOT FILE information exists, how do we know that what is in the compiled file is all that the F.B.I. has actually collected? (DO NOT FILE data can be solicited under the Freedom of Information Act, but we can't be certain any of it is retrievable, in whole or in part.) And how do we evaluate the contradictory and erroneous material? And especially, how do we evaluate it if a good deal of the material received by the requesting party is voluminously blacked out because it is still classified? In a few of the files, only one word per page is left after the excising process.

Yet, despite these impediments, the files do yield something. The inherent interest in the lives of the writers makes the files absorbing to read simply on the level of gossip. And since we know that the collection of information is a process of selection, the files also tell us about the inner life of the Bureau; what, at a given time, was on the mind of the F.B.I.

Following is a list of the writers whose F.B.I. files have been released to me. An asterisk denotes living writers who have ordered their own files and have agreed to forward the material to me. —N.R.

Leonie Adams
James Agee
Conrad Aiken
Nelson Algren
Fred Allen
Maxwell Anderson
Sherwood Anderson
Amiri Baraka
(formerly Leroi Jones)*
Djuna Barnes
S.N. Behrman
Ludwig Bemelmans
Robert Benchley
Stephen Vincent Benét
Maxwell Bodenheim
Louise Bogan
Jane Bowles
Kay Boyle*
Van Wyck Brooks
Heywood Broun
Pearl S. Buck
William F. Buckley Jr.*
Witter Bynner
Erskine Caldwell
Truman Capote
Dale Carnegie
John Cheever
Malcolm Cowley*
James Gould Cozzens
e.e. cummings
E.L. Doctorow*
Bernard DeVoto
John Dos Passos
Theodore Dreiser
Max Eastman
T.S. Eliot
James T. Farrell
Howard Fast*
William Faulkner
Edna Ferber
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Waldo Frank
Robert Frost
Erle Stanley Gardner
Allen Ginsberg*
Horace Gregory
John Gunther
Dashiell Hammett
Elizabeth Hardwick*
Moss Hart
Gabriel Heatter
Ben Hecht
Lillian Hellman
Ernest Hemingway
Josephine Herbst
Robert Herrick
Granville Hicks
Hedda Hopper
William Dean Howells
Langston Hughes
Fannie Hurst
William Inge
Randall Jarrell
Robinson Jeffers
Murray Kempton*
Joyce Kilmer
Joseph Wood Krutch
Fulton Lewis Jr.
Sinclair Lewis
A.J. Liebling
Walter Lippmann
Jack London
Robert Lowell
Leonard Lyons
Dwight Macdonald
Archibald MacLeish
Norman Mailer*
John Marquand
Edgar Lee Masters
F.O. Matthiessen
H.L. Mencken
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Arthur Miller*
Henry Miller
Jessica Mitford*
Marianne Moore
Lewis Mumford
Ogden Nash
George Jean Nathan
Anaïs Nin
Clifford Odets
John O'Hara
Eugene O'Neill
Grace Paley*
Dorothy Parker
Louella Parsons
Drew Pearson
Westbrook Pegler
Katherine Anne Porter
Ezra Pound
Ernie Pyle
John Crowe Ransom
John Reed
Elmer Rice
Theodore Roethke
Damon Runyon
Muriel Rukeyser
Carl Sandburg
William Saroyan
Delmore Schwartz
Karl Shapiro
Irwin Shaw
Robert Sherwood
Upton Sinclair
John Steinbeck
Donald Ogden Stewart
Rex Stout
Booth Tarkington
Allen Tate
James Thurber
Lionel Trilling
Carl Van Doren
Mark Van Doren
Nathanael West
Edith Wharton
E.B. White
Thornton Wilder
Tennessee Williams
William Carlos Williams
Edmund Wilson
Walter Winchell
Thomas Wolfe
Alexander Woollcott
Richard Wright
Louis Zukofsky

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The leading exponent of the private-eye novel, Dashiell Hammett, had a 354-page file begun on him in 1934, when Hoover thought incendiary messages might be contained in a cartoon strip Hammett created for the San Francisco *Call-Bulletin*. The F.B.I., which continued its surveillance of the novelist throughout his life (and even beyond, by trying to prevent his burial in Arlington National Cemetery), also once tried to embroil Hammett in a 1958 counterintelligence program against the Communist Party U.S.A. by including his name on a list to receive two phony letters written by F.B.I. agents, which were intended to stir up trouble in the party. The contents of those letters involved the writer Howard Fast, who only recently learned of their existence. When asked if the letters surprised him, he said wryly, "It surprises me because it demonstrates a degree of 'intelligence' which I have never seen in any of the functions of the F.B.I." Fast, who says he left the party in 1958, also said, "The terrible thing the F.B.I. did was to destroy social writing in America. Today, even from the so-called best of American writers, there is no social writing. The whole great American tradition of social commentary that produced all of our great writers, right up to World War II and the few years after World War II, this is over. Either a person writes as Updike does in terms of the minuscule thing or he writes in terms of nerves, obsessiveness, sex—Phillip Roth. The social view of the writer has been terrified out of existence, and that is a great tragedy for American literature."

Playwright Thornton Wilder's ninety-two-page file was begun in 1933, when his name was listed as a member of the National Committee of the American Committee for Struggle Against War. In 1940, he was suspected of being the "mysterious captain" in charge of German spies at an Austrian refugee camp in New Hampshire. Much of the information about his "activities" was collected from an informant, identified in the file only as "the girl at the Eskimo stand on the road leading up to the camp." A year later, it was reported that "no information [was] received which would link subject Wilder with any espionage or subversive activities"; but it was also reported in his file, somewhat ominously, that a person whose name is blacked out "did receive a copy of a book entitled Soviet Power."

The damaging effect of the files can be seen in the case of William Carlos Williams. His 166-page file was begun in 1930, when a letter from the poet and doctor appeared in *New Masses*. Part of that letter reads, "I like the John Reed number. Here's money. Send me more. The only thing is, what the hell? I feel in a false position. How can I be a Communist, being what I am. Poetry is the thing which has the hardest hold on me in my daily experience." Twelve years later, an F.B.I. memorandum recommended that he be temporarily watched because an informant had turned in "seventeen sheets bearing typewriting of a suspicious nature." The F.B.I. apparently thought some poems might be a clandestine code.

In 1952 Williams was investigated in connection with his appointment as a Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress, a position he never actually held. Many reasons, including ill health, were given for his failure to be appointed. Indeed, one F.B.I. memo in the file reports, "Dr. Williams had recently suffered several heart attacks [and] the family was apprehensive about another." The memo goes on to conclude that "the investigation could not be continued while he was in poor health." This could be true enough, but as the *Washington Star* reported two years later, when Williams still had not been cleared, "the appointment revolves around clean bills of health, both political and physical." (That clipping is in Williams's file.) William Carlos Williams himself said in a 1954 interview: "I don't know a thing. What did they find? They never did give me any indication. I received a communication from the F.B.I. to be fingerprinted and replied to all sorts of preliminary inquiries. Then I wasn't even given the courtesy of a reply. For heaven's sake, what kind of country is this?" Now we know exactly what happened, and that the poet's health had absolutely nothing to do with the delay. According to a November 22, 1954, report sent directly to Hoover: "*Applicant was not appointed because of unfavorable report.*" (Emphasis added.)

Not every writer who was under surveillance was a literary luminary. Hedda Hopper, the gossip columnist, has a 157-page file that was begun in 1946 when Hoover requested that a letter be written to her after she praised one of his speeches. ("Write letter to Hedda Hopper" is scribbled on F.B.I. stationery, signed "H.") In his recent book on Hoover, *Secrecy and Power*, Richard Gid Powers apprises us that "one of Hoover's principal ways of managing his Bureau was by writing marginal comments on the memos that crossed his desk." On a page in Dashiell Hammett's file, Hoover scrawled "Just call me Professor"—and then proceeded to compose a letter to be signed by this "Professor." Not only did Hoover fabricate the pseudonym, he did it for none other than Walter Winchell, to be used as the

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reply to a question the Broadway columnist had received from one of his readers concerning Hammett.

Another example involves novelist Ernest Hemingway. In a 1942 office memo regarding Hemingway's creation of his own private Cuban intelligence unit, Hoover wrote his staff: "Certainly Hemingway is the last man, in my estimation, to be used in such a capacity. His judgement is not of the best, and if his sobriety is the same as it was some years ago, that is certainly questionable." Nonetheless, Hemingway did set up the unit, which hunted German submarines. In a handwritten note elsewhere, we learn even more about Hoover's attitude: "Knowing Hemingway as I did," he jotted down, "I doubt he had any Communist leanings. He was a rough, tough guy and always for the underdog." (But the F.B.I. tracked Hemingway until his death.)

Hoover wrote a highly laudatory letter to novelist Pearl S. Buck in 1938, the year she won the Nobel Prize in Literature. But on the margin of a page in her file concerning a possible visit by Buck, Hoover scribbled: "Have someone else talk to her. My impression is that she is way to the left to say the least."

Even such a friend of the Bureau as columnist Westbrook Pegler is seen in a different light when Hoover's marginal notes on him are looked at carefully. Hoover's comments range from "This is really a very clever piece of writing" and "When Pegler keeps to humor, he is good," to "The original mental halitosis kid" and "Be very circumspect in dealing with Pegler. The rat will twist anything around to serve his own purpose." So, in any study of writers' files, examination of Hoover's handwritten notes is critical.

Hopper's dossier is full of gushingly patriotic letters she wrote to the director, and in return she was constantly fed material for her columns and lectures. (One F.B.I. report asserts, "We furnished her with considerable information in blind memoranda.") It is also noted in her file that Hopper was on the mailing list of the American Nazi Party.

As provocative and significant as those references are, they are, nonetheless, only part of the story. "All history," Samuel Johnson wrote, "as far as it is not supported by contemporary evidence, is romance." For me this means that facts can seem like fables (even if they are fables to begin with), so I decided I needed to get myself some witnesses, people with an understanding of the individual writers and the workings of the F.B.I. In a very essential way, it is in the testimony of witnesses—people who know the operations of the Bureau, people who worked for the Bureau, friends and colleagues, both well disposed and otherwise, of the deceased writers, as well as the living writers who have been or are still under surveillance—that a true understanding of the secret records lies. Indeed, it's possible even to be misled by the actual files. In many cases, unless one goes beyond the official documents, the material can be totally misleading. The recognition of that is essential to an understanding of the once-classified dossiers.

Take, for example, the case of avant-garde writer Gertrude Stein. Her eleven-page file was begun in 1937, when it was reported that "she did not seem to be a pro-any nationality, but she was anti-Roosevelt." In 1941, she and an unidentified person were "appropriately indexed," even though "in the absence of more complete and definite information concerning the left-wing activities of this unidentified person and Gertrude Stein, no action is contemplated concerning these individuals at the present time." One would conclude from the evidence in the file, then, that the F.B.I. indexed her for her purported left-wing views. (The majority of the remaining references in the file—heavily censored—have to do with some concern the F.B.I. had about an art dealer of Stein's acquaintance. There is also one brief reference that quotes an unidentified informant calling Stein "definitely pro-Nazi.") Had the Bureau looked further, it might have discovered Stein's friendship with Bernard Fay, a French intellectual who was a contributor to a pro-German occupation weekly, as well as an influential part of the Paris salon scene, where he became fast friends with Stein and Alice B. Toklas. The Centre de Documentation Juive in Paris has in its possession a 1941 official memorandum sent to the German ambassador that names Fay as a candidate "who can be counted on" to take charge of rounding up French-Jewish citizens.

"I believe that Gertrude Stein and Bernard Fay were friends," historian William Shirer said when asked about the Stein-Fay relationship. "How much influence he had over her, I know not."

"Fay was pro-Nazi," novelist and critic Elizabeth Hardwick said in an interview, and he and Stein "were indeed the best of friends. . . . You can't imagine how uninterested [Stein was] in anything except herself, so she wouldn't know what he was doing, or care."

Malcolm Cowley, the literary editor and poet, adds, "It's true Fay was a collaborationist, but I wouldn't call that testimony of guilt on Gertrude Stein's part. Fay was a writer and as such was respectable."

I began to look further than the file on Stein only after speaking to novelist, short-story writer and poet Kay Boyle, one of my most important witnesses. According to Boyle, when the Germans entered Paris, Stein and Toklas went to the south of France, where "I heard a rumor that they contacted a German Baron whom they knew, and the Baron said, 'I'm contacting Goebbels, and you'll be able to go back and live in Paris at your place.' As you are aware, all other Americans living in the occupied zone were rounded up and put in internment camps. I also believe that it might have been difficult for Gertrude and Alice to have lived in Paris or in any big French city during the war. But I heard they had not only lived through the whole war but they had German officers billeted in their house, and they cooked for them and served them. Alice B. Toklas avoids the whole issue of collaboration in the book she wrote after Gertrude's death. And their greatest benefactor, Bernard Fay, was a complete Fascist. And then the Americans came in and Gertrude had the American flag waving!"

Stein's file is misleading because so little of the real and awful truth was ever known by the F.B.I., and they seem to have had no interest in pursuing it. The fuller story is now known because of the testimony of wit-

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nesses—not because of the evidence in the files.

Boyle's own file was one of the richest for me, at least in part because of its long history. The references span the years 1939 to 1976 and include such reports as a 1943 interview concerning the poet Ezra Pound, who had been charged with treason for his pro-Axis radio broadcasts during World War II. The F.B.I. notes preposterously that she had an affair with him "prior to the First World War"—which would have been when Boyle was around 10 years old! In an interview, Boyle said, "I'm the worst person in the world to talk about Pound. . . . I get absolutely furious when I think of him. I never liked his work. I never liked him as a person. I met him for the first time in 1927, in Paris, and I just disliked him. Very much. He was so vain, and he wanted power so much. I mean that was his one thing, and that's the only reason I think that he admired Hitler and Mussolini so much, because they gave him power."

The F.B.I. at one point also falsely accused her of being a Communist, in part because she was listed on the National Committee to Abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee. The Bureau even decided at another time that she might be a spy, because an unidentified informant accused her of being an "international courier." (The only things Boyle carried back and forth over the Atlantic were her children, manuscripts and books.) In one memo in her file, another unnamed informant, when asked by the F.B.I. "for more tangible and definite information," replied, "Look into those things and then come back to see me." And the existence of Boyle's file was one of the charges brought against her husband, Joseph Franckenstein ("the gent God meant" was how Janet Flanner, who testified as a character witness for Boyle in 1953, once admiringly described him), when his loyalty was questioned by the State Department. Franckenstein was an Austrian aristocrat who became an American citizen in 1943, served in the armed forces and risked his life as a counterintelligence officer behind the German lines, where he was tortured before he was able to escape. At the time of his ludicrous and unnecessary loyalty hearing, he was a State Department official serving in Germany, and Kay Boyle was a foreign correspondent for *The New Yorker*.

Even though Franckenstein was cleared, his record continued to follow him—that is, his wife's "record" followed him. It didn't help, as Boyle put it, "that McCarthy's two henchmen, Roy Cohn and G. David Schine appeared with orders from the Senator to go through the Foreign Service files and terminate all those who had had loyalty-security hearings, whether or not they had been cleared." Although Boyle's husband was eventually reinstated in his profession, Boyle was not. "As a writer for magazines, I was blacklisted," she said, specifically referring to *The New Yorker*'s withdrawal of her accreditation in the midst of her husband's hearing. In a recent interview, Boyle said, "I contributed regularly for seven years both articles and stories, as any record would show. But that's the way everybody was in America at that time. Terrified."

There's a letter in Boyle's F.B.I. file from William Shawn, written shortly after he became editor in chief of *The New Yorker* upon Harold Ross's sudden death. In that lengthy 1952 communication addressed to the Department of State, Shawn wrote of Boyle, "I believe her to be a woman not only of rare literary talent, but of extraordinary character and of great spirituality. I have always taken her loyalty for granted and I could only be astounded if it were to be questioned." Nonetheless, there were no credentials forthcoming. Boyle also said, "Worst of all, I wrote to E.B. White and Katherine White, and then she wrote me, 'Kay Darling, You couldn't possibly be a member of the Communist Party! Why don't you just forget about it all.' No letter of recommendation followed from either of the Whites. Isn't that amazing? Everyone was so terrified. The fiction editor, Gus Lobrano, also waffled, so we went into court that day in 1953 without a recommendation from *The New Yorker*."

Recently William Shawn told me, "The confusion, I believe, revolved around the fact that I had nothing whatever to do with arranging Miss Boyle's accreditation. This request was made, I believe, by Harold Ross. . . . And I don't trust my memory; I did not at the time understand how Mr. Ross justified his decision, since Miss Boyle was not actually a staff correspondent." Asked about the phrase "not actually a staff correspondent," Shawn said, "Both Mr. Ross and Miss Boyle *hoped* that she might write some reporting pieces in Europe. . . . If Kay Boyle had actually written an article or some articles for *The New Yorker* as a correspondent, even though not a staff correspondent, it is possible that the magazine would have been in a better position to ask for a renewal of her accreditation. However, I simply don't know today what I would have done in a hypothetical situation in 1952." Boyle has said, "I only know that if Harold Ross had been alive, he'd have gone down and blown up the State Department or something."

What of importance can be learned from these files, with their blacked-out passages and biased point of view? Their utility is great if they are properly understood. The files are valuable to us as a source of raw data; the F.B.I. is, after all, a bureau of *investigation*, and as such it did—and continues to do—a great deal of investigative work. But the value of the investigation is greatest if it is checked whenever possible against the testimony of witnesses, for witnesses can tell what they know and be freely cross-examined by anyone. These dossiers enable us to trace the consequences of the F.B.I.'s "chilling effect" on writers. Another testimony must also be considered: the handwritten notes of J. Edgar Hoover. These speak most fully and most tellingly about the inner life of the F.B.I. during a certain period of its history, and reveal what exactly was on the Bureau's mind. They are witnesses to the files themselves—and what allowed the files to come into being.

Indeed, in view of the latest headlines reporting that the F.B.I. intends to invade our public libraries in its search for subversives, attempting to use our librarians as spy-catchers, an investigation of the files becomes even more significant. They clearly show a pattern of F.B.I. interest in—and often an invasion of—the privacy of a writer's mind. □

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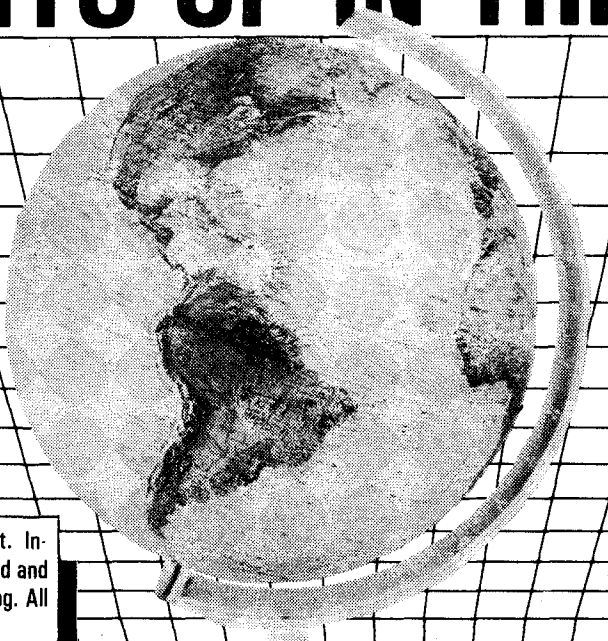

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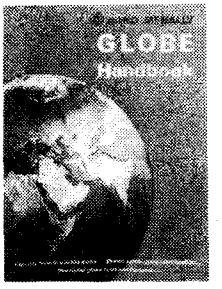

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CANADA'S MILITANT UNIONS

Some Lessons for American Labor

MICHAEL LYNK

In September, both the Canadian Auto Workers (C.A.W.) and its former American parent, the United Auto Workers, sought better job-security provisions in collective bargaining with automakers. In Canada, the C.A.W. struck Chrysler of Canada for six days and emerged with its principal demand, for pensions indexed to inflation, intact, while beating back company demands for concessions on work rules. Meanwhile, south of the border, the U.A.W. settled with Ford, without a strike, for a flawed "guaranteed employment numbers" agreement that leaves the door open for substantial job reductions in the event of an industry downturn, which is widely predicted. The two agreements, in miniature, point to some fundamental differences between the labor movements in the two countries.

Compared with its American counterpart, the Canadian labor movement has been remarkably successful. In 1965, both movements represented 30 percent of the nonagricultural work force in their respective countries. Canadian unions now represent 38 percent of the nonagricultural work force, while only 17 percent of Americans who are not farm workers belong to unions. Although the growth in Canadian union membership was largely achieved during the economic boom of the mid- and late 1970s, it held fairly steady through the severe recession, when almost 1 million Canadian workers lost their jobs, and continues in the face of national unemployment rates consistently two to four percentage points higher than those in the United States.

The willingness of Canadian unions to strike in order to advance or defend collective agreements is one of the major reasons they are thriving. Since 1960 Canada's strike record has been second only to that of Italy among Western industrialized nations. Through the 1980s Canada's rate of lost days due to strikes has been more than four times higher than that of the United States.

In addition, the labor movement's close ties with the New Democratic Party have given it a significant political presence in both federal and provincial legislatures and in the media. Although the N.D.P. is only a third party federally, and governs in only one of Canada's ten provinces, it is an influential national voice on social policy and labor legislation.

Canadian labor has traditionally practiced a European brand of social unionism, and it has links to many community and social movements. The labor movement, for example, played an important role in the creation of Canada's public health care insurance system in the 1960s, and today is prominent in national debates on child care, women's rights and peace, as well as on free trade.

Twenty years ago, more than 70 percent of Canadian union members belonged to so-called internationals. Bargaining strategies, internal union policies and even Canadian union leaders were usually chosen in the United States—a domination unique among labor movements in the industrialized West. Today, the American presence is waning as Canadian public-sector unions grow at a rapid rate and as more and more Canadian sections of international unions break away. In 1986 only 34 percent of Canadian workers belonged to American-based unions, and the proportion is likely to drop below 25 percent within the decade.

During the 1970s and 1980s Canadian telecommunications, energy, chemical, paper and forestry workers all split from their American parents to create their own organizations. The most dramatic and important break occurred through 1985 and 1986. In 1984 the U.A.W. agreed to accept lump-sum payments from General Motors and Ford, instead of negotiated wage increases, and to continue its profit-sharing agreements with auto manufacturers. The Canadian section, angered by pressure to accept the U.S. bargaining pattern, struck in September and October of that year and won negotiated wage increases. The C.A.W.'s subsequent demand for greater autonomy within the U.A.W., including the right to pursue separate bargaining goals, was rebuffed by the union's international executive board, and the Canadians left shortly thereafter.

The C.A.W., led by its charismatic president, Robert White, has emerged as the most dynamic and progressive industrial union in North America. It is a leader in a wide variety of progressive causes, including aid to Nicaragua, antiapartheid struggles and the peace movement's efforts to end U.S. cruise missile testing in Canada. It has recently achieved mergers with unions far outside its traditional jurisdiction, including brewery and airline workers and Canada's most important fishing union.

Because of its strategic position in the Canadian economy, the C.A.W. often sets the pace in innovative bargaining demands, such as paid leave for education, pension indexing and legal services plans; it also holds the line, as in 1982 and 1984, against potential trend-setting concessions. It has rebounded remarkably from the devastating impact of the 1981-82 recession; after slipping from 134,000 members in 1981 to 100,000 by 1983, the C.A.W.'s membership—counting the tentative merger with the Newfoundland fishermen's union—now stands at 163,000.

The C.A.W.'s bargaining and organizing tenacity has set the stage for the growing militancy of other Canadian unions. In June, the Letter Carriers Union defeated an attempt to impose wage freezes and two-tier wages for new hires, and to erode job security. The Conservatives were hoping that standing tough against the unpopular postal union would win back their public support.

But the strategy backfired. The letter carriers used rotating strikes and strong picket lines that not only frustrated Canada Post's attempt to use scabs to move the mail but

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also avoided potential public anger over a complete halt of mail delivery. After nineteen days, Canada Post was forced to drop virtually all its concessionary demands. The letter carriers' success has been an enormous shot in the arm for other public-sector unions, particularly rail, St. Lawrence Seaway and inside postal workers, who are facing similar demands. Last week the seaway and postal workers went on strike.

In British Columbia in April, the Social Credit government of Premier Bill Vander Zalm—the country's most right-wing provincial administration—citing the need for "harmonious labor relations" to attract more foreign investment, introduced two reactionary labor bills. They were the most radical departure to date from the social compact that labor and capital in North America have lived by since the passage of the Wagner Act in 1935. The legislation, proclaimed into law in July, abolished the British Columbia Labor Relations Board and replaced it with an Industrial Relations Council with the power to intervene unilaterally in internal union affairs, end strikes, impose contracts, limit picketing and interfere in collective bargaining. The legislation also removed the provincewide union accreditation of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, by far the most progressive teachers' union in English Canada and an effective critic of Social Credit's slashing of spending for education and social services.

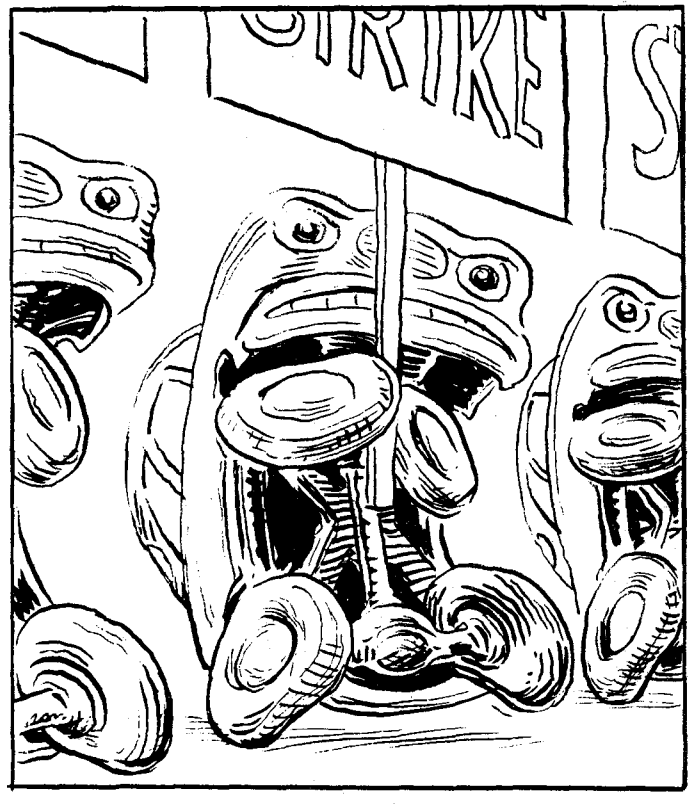
If British Columbia has become the breeding ground for many of the right's experiments in North America, it is also the home of the continent's most militant labor movement. Following seven weeks of increasingly intense protests, the provincial Federation of Labor called a one-day general strike on June 1. The general strike, which involved 300,000 workers, used reciprocal picketing—workers picketing work sites other than their own—to avoid retaliation by employers. It shut down pulp factories, newspapers, transit systems, schools and mines all over the province. Now the British Columbia labor movement faces its biggest challenge—to boycott the Industrial Relations Council and make the legislation unworkable. Its success will determine whether similar legislation appears elsewhere in Canada or the United States.

The single most significant challenge to Canadian labor today comes from the governing Progressive Conservative Party (surely one of history's great oxymorons). The federal election in 1984 that swept Brian Mulroney—a former mining executive for an American multinational corporation—and his Progressive Conservative Party to power brought to Ottawa a government eager to apply the economic policies of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. In its three years in power, the Mulroney administration has begun selling off many of Canada's state-owned Crown Corporations and forcing restrictive financial guidelines on others, such as the Post Office, Air Canada and Canadian National Railways, creating significant service cuts and loss of jobs. In addition, the Progressive Conservatives have virtually eliminated controls over foreign investment in Canada; proposed a major, regressive overhaul of the tax system; deregulated the air, rail and trucking industries; and scrapped the country's National Energy Program (which sought greater control over the American-dominated oil and gas industry).

However, the Mulroney government's most significant economic initiative has been its pursuit of a comprehensive free trade agreement with the United States. While the issue has barely scratched the surface of the American political consciousness, it has been at the center of a raging national debate in Canada for two years. The Canadian Labor Congress, Canada's principal labor federation, has become a leading voice against free trade in an evolving coalition that includes cultural, farm, native, religious and nationalist organizations, as well as some Canadian manufacturers.

Essentially, the free trade proposal would eliminate the remaining barriers between the United States and Canada, which already have the largest binational trading relationship in the world. The political impetus for free trade in Canada comes from industrial and financial circles that want continued access to the American market, protection from low-cost foreign competition and enhanced investment opportunities in the low-wage American Sun Belt. American multinational subsidiaries operating in Canada (32 percent of Canada's manufacturing sector is American-owned, the highest degree of foreign economic control in the Western world) are particularly enthusiastic about free trade. With the elimination of trade barriers, they would be free to supply the Canadian market from their plants in the United States rather than build or maintain facilities in Canada.

The opposition to free trade has focused on two issues: the threat of a continuing loss of sovereignty over political, economic and cultural choices to a powerful neighbor ten times Canada's size in population; and the specter of massive job losses. Critics of free trade also argue that Canada's extensive social security and economic support system—



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unemployment insurance, Medicare, labor legislation, agricultural subsidies, farm marketing boards and regional industrial incentives—would be diluted or abolished so that Canadian industries could compete with those in the United States on a "level playing field."

At its biennial convention in 1986, the 2.2 million-member Canadian Labor Congress unanimously adopted a comprehensive policy statement critical of the Mulroney government's initiatives on free trade, privatization and deregulation. The C.L.C. and its allies have been reasonably successful in presenting their critique to local union membership, the media and in Parliament through the New Democratic Party, so that the decided public's opposition to free trade has climbed in national opinion polls from 33 to 55 percent in the past twenty months. Whether or not it wins the fight against free trade, the C.L.C. has gained political maturity and visibility.

Now, more than ever, the Canadian labor movement will need to rely on and develop its culture of militancy, democracy and social consciousness if it is to survive, let alone thrive. While the rising national popularity of the N.D.P. is a hopeful sign (in recent opinion polls it ranked first, with 39 percent of the electorate, well ahead of the Liberals' 32 percent and the Conservatives' 27 percent), it has meant that the N.D.P. has become more cautious in presenting a clear vision of a social democratic Canada. For the Canadian labor movement, not party politics but the linking of bread-and-butter issues to broader social activism remains the best compass for weathering the storms ahead. □

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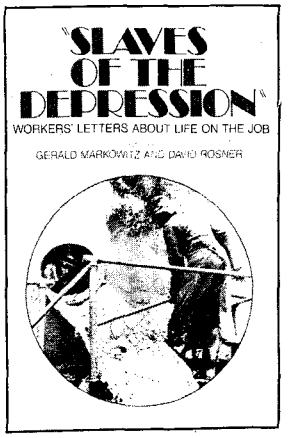

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THE OZONE FOLLIES

Is the Pact Too Little, Too Late?

JOHN GLIEDMAN

On September 15 representatives of twenty-four nations and the European Economic Community, meeting in Montreal under U.N. auspices, signed a pioneering international agreement to regulate the production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and halons, the industrial chemicals that menace the earth's ozone layer. The potential importance of the agreement cannot be overemphasized. Never before have the world's principal industrial and developing nations agreed to control an aspect of their economies in response to an intangible long-term threat to the environment.

The U.S. delegation, notwithstanding Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel's well-known partiality to suntan lotion and sunglasses as a solution to the problem of ozone depletion, played a major role in fashioning the agreement. Hodel, it will be recalled, was on the losing side in the spring policy battle about the U.S. negotiating stance at Montreal; the Environmental Protection Agency and its allies prevailed over those in the Administration who would risk an environmental disaster rather than regulate the U.S. contribution to the $2.2 billion-a-year world CFC and halon industry. The only echo of Hodelism at Montreal was the U.S. team's initial insistence that the accord be O.K.'d by countries responsible for 90 percent of global CFC production. That proposal might have delayed the treaty's implementation. However, the U.S. delegation, not coincidentally led by E.P.A. administrator Lee Thomas, eventually compromised on a more lenient plan: approval by countries representing two-thirds of world consumption. Since the United States, Western Europe and Japan account for close to that proportion, ratification is a foregone conclusion.

In April, during negotiations preceding the meeting, the European Economic Community and Japan vetoed a much tougher U.S. proposal for an immediate CFC and halon production freeze to be followed by a draconian 95 percent cutback; only Canada and Scandinavia strongly endorsed the U.S. initiative. Richard Benedick, the U.S. chief delegate, identified the main ground for opposition at an earlier meeting: European chemical companies, including I.C.I., the British giant, feared for their profits. Perversely, Japanese and E.E.C. opposition was fueled by the U.S. environmental movement's impact on the $750 million-a-year U.S. CFC and halon industry. Critics argued privately that the plan gave an unfair advantage to American corporations like Du Pont which, largely because of the efforts of en-

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vironmentalists to ban CFCs, have already invested millions in researching safer chemical alternatives.

The Montreal protocol, if it goes into effect on schedule, freezes annual CFC consumption at 1986 levels in 1990; this will be followed by a 20 percent reduction in July 1993 and a further 30 percent cutback beginning in July 1998. In 1992 halon consumption will be capped at 1986 levels. Starting in 1990 the signatories, at four-year intervals, will review new scientific evidence collected by a special panel about the state of the ozone layer.

Some of the accord's fine print points to substantially lower consumption reductions than these figures suggest. For one thing, trade sanctions cannot be imposed on violators of the agreement until four years after it goes into effect. For another, developing countries are granted a partial exemption to the curbs which, if exercised, will raise the permitted consumption during the 1990s by 10 percent. The Soviet Union also receives special treatment; it can peg its consumption reductions not to 1986 but to 1990, the last year of its current five-year plan. What's more, the treaty won't prevent some degradation of the environment. Conventional atmospheric models predict that ozone levels will still decline by about 2 percent before slowly beginning to recover in the middle of the next century. The reason: CFCs and halons have extremely long atmospheric lifetimes; more than two-thirds of the most dangerous of the CFCs produced between 1990 and 1999 (CFC-11, CFC-12 and CFC-113) will still be destroying stratospheric ozone a generation later, in 2020.

But even with the caveats, the Montreal protocol is a milestone in international cooperation to save the environment. The consumption restrictions, at the very least, will halt the current 5 to 7 percent growth in world CFC and halon output; instead of nearly doubling in the 1990s, it will remain close to the current decade's level. Some economists think that the curbs will eventually push up the prices of the most dangerous CFCs and halons to the point that, sometime in the next century, safer alternatives will drive the bad chemicals out of the market. The Montreal agreement, according to one widely publicized E.P.A. estimate, will prevent 1.2 million cataracts, 137 million cases of skin cancer and 27 million deaths from skin cancer among people born before the year 2075.

There is only one problem with the environmental scenario so painstakingly crafted by the diplomats and scientists—nature may not cooperate. New discoveries about the pace of ozone destruction raise the disturbing possibility that the ozone layer is far more vulnerable to CFC and halon pollution than conventional atmospheric models suggest. The triumph at Montreal could yet prove to be a fiasco.

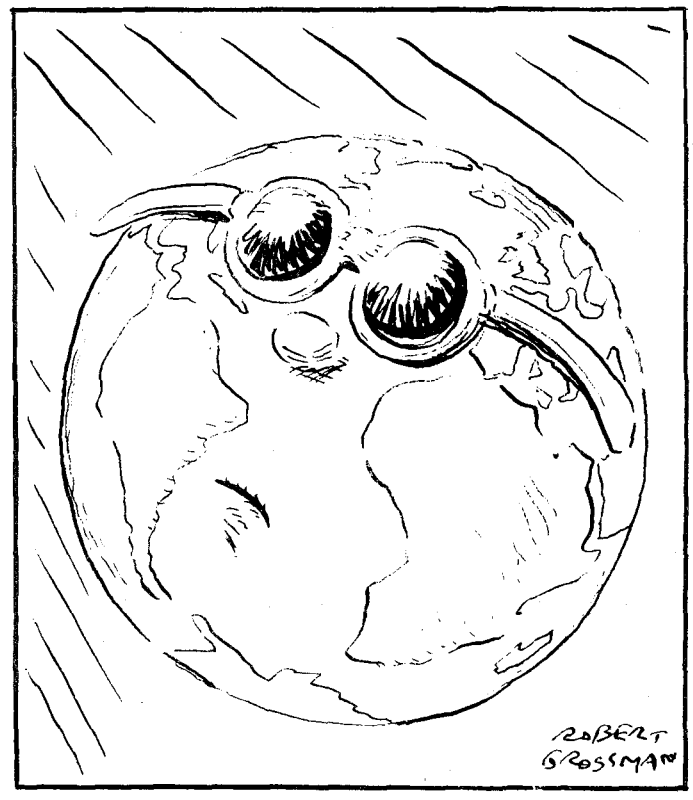
Ninety percent of the world's ozone occurs in the stratosphere, six to twenty-eight miles above the earth's surface. Yet even in regions where it is most abundant, only one molecule in 100 million is ozone. Most ozone is produced when ultraviolet light from the sun cleaves ordinary oxygen molecules into their constituent atoms; occasionally the separated atoms recombine not as O_2, ordinary molecular oxygen, but as O_3, ozone.

Ozone's importance to life stems from its ability to block the sun's deadly ultraviolet-B light. Each 1 percent reduction in the amount of atmospheric ozone allows 2 percent more UV-B radiation to reach the earth's surface.

Any significant depletion of the earth's ozone shield over temperate latitudes would be a major disaster for humanity, not to mention the rest of the planet's inhabitants. Recent studies suggest that for every 1 percent drop in the amount of ozone above a given locality, there will be a 2 to 3 percent increase in the annual number of malignant melanoma skin cancers. Last year about 23,000 Americans were diagnosed as having a malignant melanoma, and 6,000 died from it.

President Reagan suffers from a less serious form of skin cancer, a nonmelanoma type. This form of cancer, if not treated promptly, is far from trivial. It can kill or seriously disfigure. In 1986 close to 2,000 Americans died from nonmelanoma skin cancer. Researchers believe that each 1 percent decline in ozone may raise nonmelanoma skin cancer rates by as much as 6 percent.

Small increases in UV-B radiation, besides causing skin cancer, can produce cataracts and, by depressing certain immune system functions, may make the body less able to fight off tumors of any kind. In addition, increased exposure to UV-B rays may aggravate the effects of such nutritional deficiency diseases as kwashiorkor and pellagra, infectious diseases like herpes simplex, and such autoimmune disorders as lupus erythematosus. Many plants are harmed by excessive levels of UV-B rays, as are many kinds of commercially valuable marine organisms. The depletion of the ozone layer would open a Pandora's box of medical and environmental ills.



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The chemicals that raise this dire possibility, the CFCs and halons, are widely used by industry. The CFCs are used as coolants in refrigerators and automobile (but not home) air conditioners, to produce styrofoam cups and auto seat cushions and in cleaning computer circuit boards. The chemicals used in many fire extinguishers are halons. These compounds are among the most chemically inert substances known, and for good reason—they were specifically designed to be that way. However, in the stratosphere, the sun's ultraviolet light breaks down CFCs and halons, and this process releases substantial amounts of chlorine gas.

A single chlorine atom can eliminate 100,000 ozone molecules by participating in a chemical reaction that, after consuming two molecules of ozone, recycles the destructive chlorine atom back to the atmosphere, where it can do more damage. (For example, chlorine plus ozone produces an ordinary oxygen molecule and a molecule of chlorine monoxide. The chlorine monoxide then combines with another ozone molecule, producing two oxygen molecules and the original chlorine atom.)

Until recently most scientists believed that 99 percent of the chlorine liberated by the breakdown of CFCs and halons never gets a chance to destroy ozone, that it enters into reactions that form hydrochloric acid and chlorine nitrate, "safe" chemicals that essentially keep the chlorine under lock and key. That belief is central to virtually every published estimate of the long-term impact of CFCs and halons on the ozone layer.

However, there are disturbing indications that the traditional models seriously underestimate the impact of CFC and halon pollution on global ozone levels. Pollution from these chemicals may exert a noticeable effect on the ozone layer twenty or thirty years sooner than conventional atmospheric models say they should. James Angell, a meteorologist at the Air Resources Laboratory of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has analyzed ground-station ozone measurements for 1958 through 1985. He finds a 3 percent rise in ozone during the 1960s (possibly reflecting the cessation of nuclear tests in 1961), stable levels in the 1970s and about a 3 percent decline starting in the 1980s. Nimbus 4 and Nimbus 7 satellite measurements analyzed by Donald Heath, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientist who designed the instruments used to record ozone levels from space, show comparable declines. These changes far exceed those predicted by the atmospheric models that inform the Montreal treaty.

Even if ozone fell by 3 percent a decade for three decades in a row, the result for many species of plants and animals could be one of the biggest environmental changes since the ice ages. By the time a child born today graduated from college, the average amount of UV-B rays reaching the earth would be 20 percent higher than in 1979 (as noted earlier, 1 percent less ozone means 2 percent more UV-B).

Researchers have found that a 25 percent increase in UV-B exposure reduces the yields of the most widely used soybean strains by 20 to 25 percent (although UV-B-resistant strains exist). Many other food plants react adversely to increased UV-B radiation, and there is some evidence that aquatic life may be especially vulnerable to UV-B increases. One study

NOZE(D) OUT

Scientists connected with the second National Ozone Expedition (NOZE-II) pleaded unsuccessfully with the Navy to let them return to the U.S. Antarctica base at McMurdo Sound nine days earlier than NOZE-I had in 1986. Researchers wanted to land on the ice around August 10, in time to measure atmospheric pollutants just before sunrise, when the hole had not yet formed. But the Navy refused to fly the expedition to McMurdo Station before the end of the month.

The scientists' experiments were designed to test a new theory of ozone destruction—that the thick stratospheric clouds that form during the long Antarctic night enormously increase the destructive effects of CFC and halon pollution. The test results promised to address the central environmental question raised by the Antarctic ozone hole: whether or not the abrupt 50 percent decline in ozone levels during the Antarctic spring is the harbinger of equally drastic changes over temperate climes.

Antarctica, by international treaty, is a demilitarized zone, and the National Science Foundation, not the Navy, is supposed to have the last word on scheduling arrivals and departures to the scientific base at McMurdo Sound. The Navy, in the past, has ferried scientists to the research station usually between August 19 and 23. But early this year the Navy decided that the scientists should go into McMurdo Station not a week earlier than in 1986 but a week later.

On May 5, the researchers protested. Erich Bloch, director of the N.S.F., enlisted the help of the President's science adviser, William Graham. On May 22, Susan Soloman, the NOZE-II expedition leader, wrote to Peter Wilkniss of the N.S.F.'s division of polar programs, that "an early flight in will probably make the difference between NOZE-II being a useful but essentially unexciting confirmation of NOZE-I [or] truly new and forefront science."

Capt. David Srite, then commander of Naval support forces in Antarctica, declared that the issue was safety; there wasn't enough daylight at McMurdo Sound before August 26 to fly in the scientists with "prudent risk." In fact, there was a full moon over McMurdo Sound on August 11, and weather, not daylight, is the crucial factor. In June 1967 the Navy even staged a special flight to demonstrate that, weather permitting, it could safely transport scientists to and from McMurdo Station in total darkness. —J.G.

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concluded that a 10 percent decrease in ozone could increase the number of abnormal larvae by as much as 18 percent. Small increases in UV-B light might significantly reduce the productivity of phytoplankton and other aquatic plants that play a crucial role in the oceanic food chain.

However, as Greg Reinsel, professor of statistics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, emphasizes in a recent analysis of ground-station and satellite data, conducted with George Tiao of the University of Chicago Business School, it is still too soon to tell whether the post-1979 changes reflect CFC and halon pollution or natural fluctuations in ozone levels. Reinsel finds that global ozone levels have been dropping by 0.35 percent a year since 1979. That is about half the rate reported earlier by Angell and Heath, but, if it continues, it translates into a dangerously high loss rate of 3.5 percent a decade.

The short-term declines flagged by Reinsel find a disturbing echo in a new analysis by F. Sherwood Rowland, professor of chemistry at the University of California, Irvine, and his student Neil Harris. Their work raises the possibility for temperate latitudes that, as in Antarctica, a large seasonal decline followed by a recovery to normal levels is an early warning signal that CFC and halon pollution is beginning to break up the ozone layer. Rowland and Harris report that winter ozone levels over Arosa, Switzerland, have fallen 7 to 8 percent over the last fifty-five years. Most of this statistically significant decline has occurred since 1970; summer ozone levels have held constant. Measurements taken at two other meteorological stations at the same latitude—Caribou, Maine, and Bismarck, North Dakota—display similar patterns of winter decline and spring recovery.

NASA has been quick to recognize the enormous importance of sorting out the voluminous ground-station and satellite data. Drawing on more than a hundred scientists in a host of different specialties, the space agency has embarked on a massive analysis of virtually all available ozone measurements. The NASA study, which should be completed by the end of the year, could not come at a more opportune time. There is a ten-year lag between the time that CFCs and halons are released at ground level and their diffusion through the stratosphere. In addition, the equivalent of ten years' worth of current production is stored in discarded foam material and old refrigerators and air conditioners rusting away in junkyards. The data for 1979-85 is a window into the past. Chlorine pollution is bound to rise 15 percent above the 1985 level, no matter what we do, declares Rowland. He adds that production sanctioned by the Montreal agreement during the 1990s will increase atmospheric chlorine levels by an additional 25 percent.

The Antarctic ozone hole—Rowland calls it a hole in the atmosphere big enough to be seen from Mars—is the environmental wild card to end all wild cards. Its potential consequences for the ozone-depletion predictions dwarf all others. Indeed, the ozone hole could be to the models of ozone destruction that undergird the Montreal agreement what the 1974 OPEC oil crisis was to the economists' gradualist models of the effect of oil prices on the economy: a sharp reminder that in the earth's atmosphere, no less than in society, there are thresholds beyond which major changes occur suddenly rather than incrementally.

It is at least conceivable that conventional models of ozone depletion can be modified after the fact to account for the decline in global ozone levels registered by the ground-station and satellite data, should chemical pollution be proven the culprit. But those models can't account for the degree of ozone destruction that occurs each spring in the Antarctic. In 1985 and 1986 ozone levels fell to 50 percent of normal in September before recovering in late October.

To explain the destruction on the scale found just before and just after the beginning of the Antarctic spring requires unconventional models of atmospheric chemistry. In these new models, exotic "nonstandard" chemical reactions transform the "safe" chlorine compounds—e.g., hydrochloric acid and chlorine nitrate—into chlorine monoxide, an ozone killer. Those reactions may take place on the surface of microscopic dust particles or on the ice crystals in the dense stratospheric clouds that form during the Antarctic night. Other reactions involving bromine, a chemical contained in the halon compounds used in fire extinguishers, may allow chlorine monoxide to destroy ozone over a far wider range of atmospheric conditions than was believed possible even two or three years ago.

The first indication that chlorine pollution causes the ozone hole came last fall, when scientists who had gone to McMurdo Station, Antarctica, as part of the 1986 National Ozone Expedition (NOZE-I) announced that they had

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found a hundred times more chlorine monoxide in the parts of the stratosphere where ozone depletion was greatest. Abnormally high levels of a related compound, chlorine dioxide, were also detected; sunlight and bromine may turn that molecule into an ozone killer. Skeptics initially challenged the NOZE-I findings. However, as the delegates were gathering in Montreal to sign the ozone treaty, a new NOZE-I study by a California Institute of Technology group appeared in the British journal *Nature*. This study is immune to the criticisms of earlier ones and strongly implicates CFCs and halons in the Antarctic ozone destruction.

JUSTICE BORK?

Abortion, free speech, civil rights, race relations . . .

In October 1983, and June 1984, Jamie Kalven provided Nation readers with a grounding in the reactionary constitutional philosophy of Judge Robert Bork. Copies of this timely set of articles are now available for $2 each; $1.50 each for orders of 10 or more.

BORK UPDATE

In a September 19, 1987, cover story Herman Schwartz discusses "The Frantic Reflagging of Bork" as a centrist, on the eve of Congressional confirmation hearings. Also, Jamie Kalven details Bork versus the First Amendment. Copies of this issue are $3 each.

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With chlorine fingered as the culprit, scientific attention focuses on understanding the chemical mechanisms that produce the ozone hole. The NOZE-II expedition, although its arrival in Antarctica in August was crucially delayed by the Navy [see box, page 378], may shed light on these questions. A better bet is the NASA aerial survey, which just ended, of the ozone hole. Operating out of Punta Arenas in southern Chile, two planes took air samples and other measurements through the length and breadth of the ozone hole. The NASA study has already confirmed the NOZE-I findings and shown that this year's ozone hole is even larger than last year's.

Even with the new evidence linking CFCs and halons with ozone destruction in the Antarctic, the great ozone hole could be a tempest in a teapot. Global wind patterns in the stratosphere are such that even a sharp decline in Antarctic ozone levels has a negligible impact on ozone levels elsewhere. The reason: Most of the earth's ozone is created in the tropical stratosphere, and ozone-rich winds from the north reach the Antarctic stratosphere only after they have replenished the supply of ozone in lower latitudes. In this sense, the term "ozone hole" is misleading; there is no evidence that the stratosphere has, as it were, sprung a leak.

Atmospheric scientists are worried about a more subtle but no less serious possibility. Under the right conditions—a massive volcanic eruption, an unusually heavy concentration of stratospheric clouds during the Arctic winter, a slight increase in the amount of CFCs, etc.—nonstandard chemistry might suddenly kick in at warmer latitudes and produce ozone holes over inhabited regions. Virtually overnight, the ozone problem would become an ozone crisis.

On one level, the attempt last spring by some elements in the Administration to sabotage the ozone agreement stands antipodal to the genuine diplomatic breakthrough just achieved in Montreal. On another level, however, the two events have a great deal in common. They are a reminder of just how strongly the best and the worst in our political institutions share the same "business as usual" assumption about nature: that, whether the issue be the pace of AIDS research or the environment, major change in the natural world always occurs gradually enough to conform to the exigencies of politics and the needs of high-level officials to indulge in their favorite ideological fantasies, whether those be the Laffer curve, suntan lotion or some crackpot combination of the two.

As if to hammer that point home, the day after the United States signed the ozone protocol, a presidential study group on acid rain claimed in an interim report that acid rain probably doesn't damage forests. Environmentalists, including Tom McMillan, the Canadian Minister of the Environment, attacked the report's conclusions as hogwash (most of the acid rain in eastern Canada comes from U.S. pollution). But E.P.A. administrator Thomas, even as he was basking in the well-deserved glow of his triumph over Hodelism, defended the report as "a good scientific assessment of what we know about acid rain." In Montreal, no less than in Washington, it was business as usual. □

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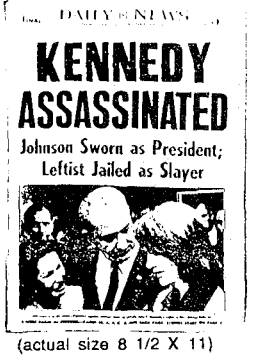
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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

American Primitive

ROBERT SHERRILL

MAN OF THE HOUSE: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill. *By Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill, with William Novak. Random House. 387 pp. $19.95.*

The Mayflower Madam, Lee Iacocca and now Thomas P. O'Neill—it seems that William Novak specializes in ghosting autobiographies for people who are, generally speaking, in the same line of work.

He does it very well. I particularly admire the way he can make his patrons' slick gossipiness take on almost the appearance of candor. And for O'Neill he has also done a good job of conveying that kind of layabout charm that we have come to associate with so many Boston pols.

But the O'Neill who comes through the Novakian sieve also conveys a real triteness. Wow. I get the impression that any idea with a draft of more than two millimeters would immediately run aground in the deepest channel of O'Neill's brain. I don't know which is the more depressing: the shallowness of his judgments, his gutlessness (O'Neill himself can recall only three times in fifty years of politics that he showed courage) or his paralyzing habit of finding the funny side of disasters.

For instance, the barbaric Gramm-Latta budget pushed through Congress on behalf of Reagan in 1981 could have been bottled up in the House Rules Committee. O'Neill admits he had the power to hold it there. He admits that members such as Jack Brooks of Texas and Don Edwards of California begged him not to give an inch.

But O'Neill, a lardy liberal, was too cowardly to take the heat that would have ensued if he had blocked it. So he let the legislation reach the floor, where of course it was passed, with the result, as he admits, that

> the Republicans were able to put in Social Security reductions that never could have passed on their own. And that was just the beginning, as a great many Americans were hurt through cuts in various social, health, and education programs. Good-bye to public service jobs under the Comprehensive Employment Training Act, and to college education benefits from Social Security. Medicare payments were lowered, along with student loans. Child nutrition programs were slashed to ribbons. Unemployment compensation was reduced from thirty-nine weeks to twenty-six at a time when more people than ever were out of work. A million food-stamp recipients were struck from the rolls, and the rest had their benefits cut. The administration even repealed the Randolph-Sheppard Act, which provided that food concessions in federal buildings be staffed by blind people.

Now pay attention. Does O'Neill interpret these results as a crushing blow to the nation? No, he interprets them as a crushing blow to *himself*. Like most politicians, he is so damned self-centered that the importance of a legislative battle ultimately comes down to whether he was hurt. He continues:

> Once the bills got the floor, I screeched and I hollered and I fought his program every way I could, but there are times that you just can't buck a trend. I got clobbered so badly that I felt like the guy in the old joke who gets hit by a steamroller. Somebody runs to tell his wife about the accident.
>
> "I'm taking a bath right now," she says. "Could you just slip him under the door?"
>
> That's what happened to me during the President's first year, except that they didn't bother to slip me under the door. They just left me lying out in the street.

Poor guy. But he's still able to take our national disaster like a good sport and joke about it.

What doesn't remind O'Neill of a joke reminds him of an anecdote. *Man of the House* is virtually a string of anecdotes. And that's a plus, for O'Neill is generally a good storyteller. Anyway, we learn more from his anecdotes than we do from his feeble efforts as a historian and profiler.

My favorite anecdote is about the time O'Neill mentioned to President Reagan that the desk in the Speaker's office had once belonged to Grover Cleveland. With his usual alertness, Reagan responded, "That's very interesting. You know, I once played Grover Cleveland in the movies." O'Neill, who had just seen *The Winning Season* on late-night TV, was prepared to straighten him out: "No, Mr. President. You're thinking of Grover Cleveland Alexander, the ball player."

My other favorite anecdote is about Sam Rayburn, who, O'Neill tells us, in his later years as Speaker dealt almost solely with committee chairmen and hardly recognized anybody else even in his own party.

> But in 1959, when Daniel Inouye of Hawaii came into the House, Rayburn knew him right away and always said hello. Inouye, who had lost an arm during World War II, was aware that this was unusual, and he once said to Rayburn, "Mr. Speaker, I'm very honored that you recognize me."
>
> "Come on," said Rayburn, "how many one-armed Japs do we have around here?"

Here are five reasons I like the O'Neill I found in this book:

§ He is no stuffed shirt. When he became Speaker of the Massachusetts Legislature, he rode the streetcar to his own inauguration, the family car having been broken down for several months.

§ During his thirty-four years in Congress (it's hard to believe, but I'll take his word on this) he never issued a public statement or a press release taking credit for getting Federal money for his district.

§ He disliked Bobby Kennedy as a "self-important upstart" and "a know-it-all" and didn't get along with the smart alecks in the gang around President Kennedy—Kenneth O'Donnell, Larry O'Brien, Walter Rostow, McGeorge Bundy. He says if he had been Lyndon Johnson, he "would have fired them all" as soon as he became President.

§ He hates Hamilton Jordan, whom he describes as a spiteful incompetent who talked with him only three times in four years and "didn't even join us at the White House breakfast meetings where we discussed upcoming legislation with the President."

§ He loathes columnists Evans and Novak—"Errors and Nofacts," he calls them—and says they, in effect, tried to bribe him with promises of great press notices in return for his being a tattletale.

But there are many more reasons for looking at O'Neill as a solid example of why liberalism particularly and democ-

Robert Sherrill is co-author of Why They Call It Politics: A Guide to America's Government *(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).*

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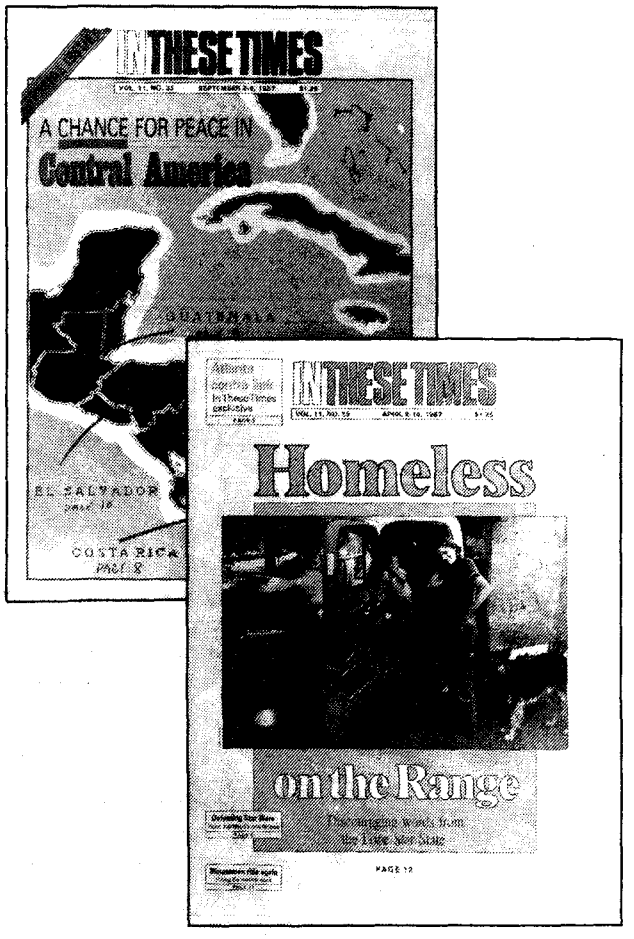

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racy generally are in deep trouble. His decade as Speaker made him one of the most important Democrats in the country. Alas. Consider:

§ His ethics were political in every sense of the word. He loves to tell tales about James Michael Curley, a crook who looted Boston, a religious bigot who made fun of Unitarians, a would-be dictator who used thugs to beat up political opponents, an extortionist. But, though O'Neill ritualistically deplores Curley's ethics, he adds, "Whatever you could say about his methods, his heart was always in the right place," and he obviously admires Curley's style.

Understandably, O'Neill skims right over some of his own highly questionable business deals. Those, plus the fact that he had given false information to the House on the eve of his election to the Speakership in 1976, prompted questions from *The New York Times* at the time, but O'Neill's response was, "I will not answer any questions about my personal or my public life," and he continues to clam up about those dealings.

As for the parties and gifts he received from a South Korean agent—generosity that was part of the larger activity known as Koreagate, when $850,000 was distributed to thirty House members—O'Neill devotes several pages to convoluted explanations and winds up saying that the House Ethics Committee cleared him completely. Which is true. What he doesn't mention is that Leon Jaworski, the attorney hired especially to conduct the committee's probe, observed as he packed up and headed home that "public skepticism and cynicism" about the results of the investigation were well founded. Apparently implying a whitewash, Jaworski added, "There should be—and I think there is—a better method of conducting inquiries into alleged wrongful conduct of high officials in our three branches of government than to resort to self-investigation."

§ O'Neill is tediously loyal to the House and idiotically blind to its faults. His two predecessors as Speaker, John McCormack and Carl Albert, were complete duds, complete blanks except for their little foibles—McCormack was such a religious nut that he kept a priest handy at all times; Albert, as everyone knows, was a lush—but O'Neill waltzes right past their defects and, in fact, makes McCormack out to be quite a genius. I suspect he does this at least partly because McCormack was a good poker player. In a number of passages, O'Neill tells of his use of poker as a standard by which character can be measured (Nixon fails the test because he talked too much while playing), and I'm not surprised because O'Neill spent most of his nonlegislative life in that activity.

O'Neill is so loyal to anybody who passed through the House that he gives hilariously excessive praise to his old pal Jerry Ford's presidency. My favorite: "The transition from Nixon's administration to Ford's was a thing of awe and dignity." My next-favorite is his defense of Ford's cloddish record in the House: "While Ford voted wrong most of the time, at least he was decently wrong."

§ Although O'Neill is doubtless intimately familiar with the streets and alleys of Boston, he often seems to be completely out of touch with the rest of the world. You will never encounter a more grotesquely flawed judgment of Southern politics than this:

> In the North, politics is far more blunt and rambunctious. Whereas the northerner enjoys conflicts and will actually seek them out, the southerner does his best to avoid political quarrels and skirmishes.

That kind of parochial stupidity left him completely unequipped to deal with or understand Jimmy Carter. O'Neill blames the top men surrounding Carter, all conservatives, for acting as a "restraining force on Carter's liberal instincts." In fact, Carter had no liberal instincts, which is why he surrounded himself with conservatives. Bert Lance once told it right: "He campaigns liberal, but he governs conservative." Carter did it in Georgia and he did it in Washington, and it is quite astounding that O'Neill was so thickheaded he didn't catch on in four years.

O'Neill's ignorance of politics elsewhere in the country also left him vulnerable to Reagan. He admits that he was caught off guard by Reagan's extreme conservatism because he had heard that when Reagan was Governor of California, "despite his conservative pose, he turned out to be a moderate." The truth, as everyone even passingly informed about California politics knew, is that the Democratic leaders of the legislature—particularly Jesse Unruh—throttled Reagan's natural conservatism and forced him to accept their moderation.

§ It is hard to believe that such an important politician would have such a feeble and often inaccurate grasp of history. He says, "In the Eisenhower era, the nation was in its glory and the economy was booming." Not so. There were three recessions during Ike's administration, the last one severe enough to be the cause, as many believe, of Nixon's defeat.

He says of Carter, "It wasn't his fault that oil prices tripled and wrecked our economy, or that a band of Iranians seized our hostages and held them for over a year." Wrong on both counts. Many liberals in Congress begged him

NOVEMBER GARDEN WITH MOON

Last twilight, I pulled up withered stalks
tomato and pepper, broccoli, squash
threw them off toward the compost pile.

Dazed murmuring overhead, crackle
of stem, whirl of sudden airborne root. It was
half dark, it was a departing room and I was not

gentle, nor was I thinking about spring, some
vague glad rejuvenation. None of that. I stood
shadow and eater, eyeing one small squash

off the garden's edge, an afterthought of harvest, blank
penny in the weeds. Carrots too, forgotten all summer,
I coaxed them now into dim light: stubby creatures

alert in their brash color, even intelligent, as though
they would walk a few inches for a joke if
I asked. The moon stepped out—an awful

perfect lens. I stopped, then shredded off
the leafy tops. I stuffed them cold
into a basket. Behind some clouds, they stirred,

the elegant friends: planets, the old gods, death.

Marianne Boruch

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to ration gasoline (public opinion polls showed that the people favored rationing over higher prices) and to maintain price controls on natural gas and crude oil; but Carter's program went in exactly the opposite direction from these restraining tactics and thereby encouraged world and domestic producers to exploit the energy market scandalously. As for the seizing of hostages at our embassy in Teheran, Carter as much as admitted at the time that this would happen if he allowed the Shah of Iran to come into this country for medical care—something that he nevertheless did, after being requested to do so by the Shah's old buddies, David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger.

I suppose it is because of O'Neill's primitive view of history that we get so many clichés. Harry Truman was "feisty" and "down-to-earth." Jack Kennedy had "glamour and charisma." As for Lyndon Johnson, "If it hadn't been for Vietnam, [he] could have gone down in history as another Roosevelt." O'Neill has equally profound insights into foreign leaders:

> Gorbachev struck me as sharp, talented, and charming . . . which is what makes him so dangerous. The Russian leadership may have affected a new and more sophisticated style, but the Soviet bear remains as aggressive and unpredictable as ever.

§ He is intellectually lazy. He admits that he never was one for learning the particulars of legislation; his talents lay in taking any legislation that had received the party stamp of approval and hustling support for it. The latter is, of course, an extremely valuable skill, but unless O'Neill knew the ingredients of the nostrums he was peddling—and he often didn't—it makes him something of a political quack.

His intellectual laziness was best illustrated by his reliance on aides (a reliance, I concede, that cripples not only fat Congressmen from Massachusetts but most members, and leaves them mere puppets of their yuppie staffs). O'Neill once said of his aide Ari Weiss, "He thinks exactly as I think," and he left Weiss to do much of his thinking for him.

Indeed, O'Neill is a classic example of the inmates of Congress in that even when he was confronted with a major decision that required a personal statement of his position, he turned the job over to young flunkies. Thus, when in late 1967 O'Neill decided cautiously and almost surreptitiously to come out against

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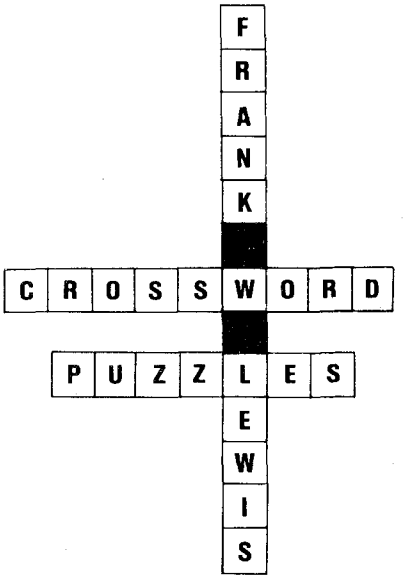

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the Vietnam War, he did not have the spunk or the gumption or the intellectual energy to write his own statement. Instead, he turned the job over to two law students—interns, mind you, not even regular staff members—to draft a newsletter to the folks back home telling of his decision. So it is no wonder that now, in "writing" his autobiography, he hired an outsider to guide his hand.

For such passivity, he properly should earn very little. But he got a million dollar advance for this book. One million bucks. Which will help explain why he sounds so happy in these pages about the passage of the tax "reform" law in 1986. That new law, by my reckoning, will save him at least $120,000 in taxes. □

Teen Arts

FREDRIC PAUL SMOLER

WATCHMEN. *By Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. DC Comics/Warner. 384 pp. Paper $14.95.*

Watchmen comics were brought to my attention by a man in Los Angeles who got the tip from a friend who was on serious speaking terms with some teen-agers. For one reason or another, teen-agers are rarely forthcoming about their literary enthusiasms. My friend was equally cagey, almost furtive: Check these out. . . . No, its not that they're exactly *good*, just check 'em out. So I did. I was wandering around downtown, killing time before a weekend showing of *River's Edge*, when I noticed a comic shop. I bought the eight or so *Watchmen* in stock and asked the two kids minding the store for a tip on the series. The teen-ager at the till barely looked up: "It's about how awful the world would be if there were any superheroes at all." Let's hold that thought.

Six years ago, a boy attending the local high school in Milpitas, California, strangled his girlfriend and reported the fact to his pals, who dropped by the scene—a bank of the local river—to see her corpse; none of them informed the police for several days, which omission, when discovered, greatly disturbed the citizens of Milpitas. The national press picked up the story and it became first a particularly macabre nine-day wonder and later the plot of *River's Edge*.

Official enthusiasms are often illuminating cultural material in their own right. The reviewer at *The Wall Street Journal* was quite taken with *River's Edge*, as was her colleague at *The New York Times*; both found it a suitably apocalyptic assessment of Kids Today, and its somber theme provided them with two curious pleasures. First, there was the pleasure of solemnity. Both reviewers were able to decry the dissolution of nuclear families and the effects of what is still called mass culture. Then there was their perverse satisfaction in finding in the bleak events of rural California evidence that they were members of the last truly human generation.

The assiduous reader of reviews will probably not be surprised to discover that *River's Edge* is not the movie described by its admirers. It intends and achieves precisely the reverse effect: It exploits and subverts the viewer's apocalyptic expectations and asserts that Kids Today are pretty much, well . . . kids. One sociopath pops up, murders a girl and does awful things to her corpse, but the rest of the locals are more particular and more human; they are recognizable adolescents, filled with a need for romance that veers perilously close to melodrama. They are forced to constitute that romance out of local materials, which is to say a superannuated post-New Left schoolteacher, bad movies and the neighborhood psychotic. After a day or so, they work out their obligations to one another, see through a canting fraud and win a bit of sexual wisdom.

The viewers, compelled to acknowledge the humanity of most of the characters, begin to fear that they have been cruelly misled by the critics who have aroused a species of dystopian voyeurism. Imagine being reduced to hoping that a 13-year-old will prove to be a fratricide. In a magnificent anticlimax, the hero looks with mild incredulity at his kid brother, who is pointing a revolver at him. "C'mon," the hero says, with some asperity. "I'm your brother." And so he is, and everybody goes home.

This is not to say that *River's Edge* is entirely cheerful. It seems horribly easy to make bad mistakes when the only available heroes must be conjured up out of Rambo, Reagan and an aging, crippled doper. There is no legitimate authority here; the New Lefty schoolteacher is a stagy buffoon and the cops are deceitful bullies. The most sympathetic adult is the hero's mother, a weary good-natured young nurse who bears the burdens of adulthood with a game, bewildered air. Where, one asks, would a kid from this place get any assistance in imagining, in any artful way, his historical situation? Well, he could always try comic books.

Orwell's "Boy's Weeklies" famously urged the equivalent of left comic books; Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, British artists who struck a deal with DC Comics for a limited series of *Watchmen* (twelve issues), actually seem to have done it. The series posits an alternative universe with an elaborate history, one that diverges from ours in the mid-1930s, when it begins to resemble that of the lesser comic books of the period. Costumed human heroes appear to fight gangsters and then go on to fight World War II. Some are Red- or gay-baited and purged during the McCarthy era, while others become C.I.A. hit men. (Point of clarification: Batman is a costume hero and Superman is a superhero.) In the early 1960s a superhero appears by the classic comic book route (nuclear accident); due to his murderous exertions, the United States wins the war in Vietnam and goes on to provoke the Soviet Union ever afterward. The Comedian, a costume hero-turned-C.I.A. man, murdered Woodward and Bernstein in '72. The Comedian's own murder, on October 12, 1985, begins the series, much of the alternative history being narrated in various flashbacks. He and others suppressed the riots of the 1960s and 1970s, broke a police strike and stabilized Nixon's America, but in the middle of the series the superhero abandons earth, the Russians invade Pakistan and a nuclear war seems about to break out. Each comic book concludes with pages of ancillary "documentary" material: excerpts from this universe's cold war political science, racist and anti-Semitic newspapers (very pro-superhero), autobiographies, etc., and this material is wittily crafted and weirdly interesting. There are odd touches of sexual detail; the superhero has a recognizable penis and scrotum, and a tough lesbian cabdriver judiciously eyes a *Hustler* centerfold. If you haven't looked at a commercial comic book since the mid-1960s, the effect is quite bizarre.

How good are they? I sympathize

Fredric Paul Smoler teaches history at Sarah Lawrence College.

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with my friend's coyness; the question may be unhelpful. The narrative tone is melodramatic and hyperbolic, and the initial point of view seems blackly reactionary, but the melodrama seems a sensible concession to the tastes of the intended audience, while the retro politics may be an effective way of teaching people to read carefully. The reader begins with his or her probable prejudices flattered (Reagan is most popular with Americans under the age of 25) and slowly watches the authority of the initial point of view crumble. Ironies abound and are economically achieved through the juxtaposition of the "documentary" material and the orthodox narrative; the pleasures of the text begin to depend on them. The alternate history alludes to a real history largely unknown to contemporary teen-agers, many of whom cannot date Watergate within fifty years, and I expect that the fictive history compels the reader to discover the contours of actual history; getting on the inside of the joke, and staying there, depends upon it. The alternate world is filled with this world's evils: to pick at random, prisoners are raped in American jails and cops can beat suspects savagely, two things omitted from the comics of my salad days.

My friend in L.A. tells me that there is some evidence that *Watchmen* does have this salutary effect on reading. When the series concluded two months ago, many of its readers felt that it had ended disappointingly and began to debate Moore and Gibbons's political intentions on Compuserve. The younger readers expressed sympathy, at least in the abstract, for the sort of stern measures taken by a self-appointed authority that bring issue number 12 to a close. Somewhat older readers—apparently college freshmen and sophomores—pointed out that we already have costumed characters who take the law into their own hands, and that the results are simultaneously appalling and farcical. The younger readers inquired as to the names of these prodigies; the older ones cited Colonel North and Admiral Poindexter. On Compuserve, they are quarreling about it still.

Is *Watchmen* a conscious attempt to follow Orwell's advice? I have no reason to think Moore and Gibbons are such calculating fellows; the stuff they produce may delight them in an uncomplicated way. Whatever their intentions, I think their work might serve as nourishing fare for the famished souls of *River's Edge*. Abandoned in a mean time, they are tempted by the most fraudulent of heroes. As the kid observed, *Watchmen* serves to make one very skeptical of succor by heroes. The idiom, the psychological tone, the taste for melodrama and extremity, for hyperbole and romance, for an inchoate adversarialness . . . I think Moore and Gibbons would have gone down nicely with the folks in *River's Edge*.

We remain beset by certain "progressive" notions about mass culture (proverbially bad, the instrument of hegemony and domination, the apparatus of indoctrination, etc.) and popular culture (good, expressing the genius of the people and always to be preferred to the fetishized canonical texts). These categories are of wonderfully little help in assessing the culture we actually encounter. I found in *Watchmen* comics—bad art, if push comes to shove—what seems to be an authentic response to a cultural dilemma suggested by *River's Edge* (for my money, pretty good art): the problem of an adolescence occurring in a period of right-wing dominance, in which the available cultural resources are insipid or toxic. It's not that they're exactly *good*.

People in trouble look for ideas to describe their situation, and heroes to resolve it. *River's Edge* evokes a culture of provincial Reaganism, which offers too few ideas, and too many ersatz heroes, especially for the boy whose mother struggles to be a parent in the intervals between working the night shift and placating her sulking boyfriend. *Watchmen* packages some ideas in a form likely to make it to Milpitas, where they may contest our era's imaginary past and self-anointed saviors. There is something intriguing about Moore and Gibbons's strategy. Against the narcotic vision of a fraudulent small-town America, plundered from the movies, they have deployed a more savage sense of our situation and inserted it in a comic book. □

THE HOLLY TREE

More than a tragically impaired
sense of moral perception
is implied here as I watch the local householder
hack down the holly tree in his backyard. It is of course
the only domesticated holly for thirty miles, a shabby tree
with leaves that look waxed, a tree from which everything
barring life itself
has been expunged, but still a tree. Walking by I sneeze;
he says, *Salud*,
and again, *salud*. Perhaps this is consideration
he shows me, at least acknowledgement
of fellow humanness. I stop to ask him why he kills the tree
and listen to his story which includes the arm of his son
broken from a fall, needle thorns scratching
his face, birdshit, his wife's hatred of the dull,
yellowish, evergreen leaves. Younger,
I would have energetically explained the special
consideration he owes the tree, its singularity
among the ragged seaside flora on this peninsula; perhaps,
I would say, it is the simple stitch
that holds darkness away; perhaps
it is connection or emblem, aggregate and
fulcrum of the interspiritual penetration
of omnipresence, immanent
revelation—by god, the Christ, the Son of Allah, Krishna himself.
What I say is, Mind
if I take a sprig?
which I do, and walk on down the descendant street
where beyond the peaked and gathered roofs
the fresh sea glitters, another
frail extravagance I guess, depleted,
epicene and impermanent too.

Charlie Smith

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Rich in Words

MICHAEL MALONE

RICH IN LOVE. *By Josephine Humphreys. Viking. 261 pp. $16.95.*

What in the world does it mean for a reader or reviewer or another novelist to say that a particular author "can really write"? This tribute is certainly not to be confused with modish subject matter, stylistic fads, celebrity status or the other extraliterary ways novelists have captured the fancy of the public early in their careers. "Can really write" also no longer appears to mean that a novelist has really kept writing, building a large body of work, or even sustaining a large single work. Nor does it necessarily mean technical virtuosity as in William Gaddis's *J R*, or breadth of theme as in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, or an especially distinctive voice like Barry Hannah's. It doesn't necessarily mean even the ability to tell a story.

Josephine Humphreys has written only two novels, both of them modest and accessible in their design, modest and domestic in their subject matter—primarily the personal relations of husbands and wives, parents and children. She is neither a grand old-style storyteller nor a modernist littérateur, and her tone is as far from minimalist fashions as her setting is from SoHo. Her characters are not particularly remarkable individuals; her plots are quiet and simple. She is a Southern writer, in that she lives and works in her native Charleston, the setting of her books, but the Southern Gothic never pushes far into her vision. There are no Popeyes or Misfits, no sisters who shoot their husbands, no rapists devoured by tigers. Southernness is integral to the personalities of her characters, yet never the focus of their lives, and (at least by the standards of Southern literary tradition) those lives are for the most part fairly uneventful. In *Dreams of Sleep* an unhappy wife almost leaves her adulterous husband. In *Rich in Love* a teen-age girl comes of age after a summer of family upheaval in which her parents separate and she falls in love with her older sister's new husband.

It is not the stories per se that engage us, but Humphreys's ability to convey the ways in which her people inhabit their stories. Through words she gives us people's responses to their own lives; that is to say, Humphreys is someone, in Henry James's phrase, on whom nothing is lost—at least, nothing at which she has chosen to look. Within the compact borders of her landscape, she knows where and how and what to see. In a housewife at the sink, watching her daughters in the yard, she sees women's "careless ease with dishes, ceaseless care with children." She sees "the anonymity and humility of weeds" and the "whirring love notes" of doves cooing, as well as old "heating pads . . . stiffened like dried meat," and the way the rotating wings on a mailbox's wood goose resemble "a swimmer backstroking like mad." She sees the type of men who go "shouldering their way through life as if it were a crowded sports event." In finding words, joining them into sentences, crafting sentences into paragraphs, she shows an often exquisite judgment, a tone of almost perfect pitch and rhythm, a feel for metaphor and image that is always sure and sometimes stunning. That is what we mean by "really writing," and I suspect that is what Reynolds Price (who taught her, and in whose lineage her style belongs) meant when he praised the "wise beauty" of *Dreams of Sleep*.

In fact, that first novel in some ways succeeds less as a narrative than as a beautifully written tone poem, a subtle counterpoint of moods—the sad, somnolent drift of a dissolving marriage set against the sharp pain of love and growth. Like its Charleston setting, there is a quiet, pale shimmer to its central characters. The doctor, Will, in his "too cool and soft" office, who (particularly under the influence of "poetry and bourbon and honor") sees sadness everywhere, and slow decay, and who "has to keep reminding himself that he's alive." His wife, Alice, once a mathematician, now a housewife, who does not feel at home in her house, and for whom the world outside the house has become a foreign "toy town" busy at the endless "shifting of goods and wastes." The teen-age baby sitter, Iris Moon, who for all her clear, resilient, competent youth, has had to struggle to come back from hospitalized despair after a breakdown, when she felt "I can't carry myself another step into this life." For all three, life has been a dream of sleep, in which, as an elderly black woman laments, "Everything goes into thin air. You can't *hold* it." The book ends with the rich promise of reunion for the couple, new life for the young woman, but we must take it on faith that those promises will prove true.

I've summarized *Dreams of Sleep* because the situation of *Rich in Love* is a variation on its plot. But here the unhappy housewife runs away at the beginning, not the close of the book, and she does not turn around and come back. Here the teen-age girl who wants to hold the world together is not hired help but the younger daughter of that affluent middle-aged couple. Lucille Odom is, however, very like the earlier Iris Moon in her courage, kindness and will—even in sharing a threadlike scar on her upper lip. So it isn't surprising to hear that the germ for *Rich in Love* was Humphreys's fondness for Iris Moon, and her impulse to do more with such a character. Nor is it surprising that her decision to let Lucille narrate *Rich in Love* felt at first a little suffocating after the technical freedom provided by the omniscient narrator of her first novel. Ordinarily one would expect the coming of age theme of *Rich in Love*, with its first-person female voice, to precede the more technically complicated *Dreams of Sleep*. But in execution, *Rich in Love* is in no way inferior to its predecessor. Less of a lyric poem, it is in fact, in its construction of scenes, in the trueness of its dialogue, a better *novel*.

Humphreys has said that she is "more interested in the words" than the story, has sought the "story as a vehicle for words." In *Rich in Love* she has not only found a story, she has given it an immensely likable storyteller. As the book begins, Lucille informs us that due to sudden family calamity (her mother has run off, her sister has come home "accidentally" married and discontentedly pregnant), her own life has become "for a short while the kind of life that can be told as a story—that is, one in which events appear to have meaning." Now, that's a writer talking, and a little of it goes a long way. When Lucille adds that she's had a premonition of something happening ("I sensed that I was on a verge. A large block of time

Michael Malone's most recent novels are Uncivil Seasons *and* Handling Sin. *Little, Brown will publish his next,* Time's Witness, *in 1988.*

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was due to crack open in front of me"), when she tells us that she's worried that her bereft father will "blow his mental fuses" by suddenly turning to philosophy books for consolation, after a life of an annual Louis L'Amour or *Cujo* ("For an amateur, [tackling the nature of good and evil] is more than the mental system can handle"), that's a *character* talking, one whose story we're happy to sit back and hear. Far from being suffocating, Lucille Odom is a gust of clean, bright air. Most refreshing of all, she has a wry wit, and fine comic timing—talents it would have been impossible to predict from the comparatively humorless *Dreams of Sleep*.

At 17, Lucille thinks of herself as an introspective, observant young woman with a fondness for solitude, vigilance, Latin etymologies and taking charge. She lives in a beautiful home on the water in Mount Pleasant, a suburb now connected to Charleston by vistas "dull as advertising" and by "straight uninterrupted shopping with no letup"—the world of the rich New South of malls, Mercedes, marijuana, tour buses, windsurfing clubs and cul de sacs of air-conditioned houses with cathedral ceilings. When her mother (who likes to discuss nuclear waste and Indian health care, who still wears peasant blouses and carries macramé purses) leaves all the "creeping clutter" of her married life behind with a matter-of-fact note to her husband ("To make a long story short, it is time for me to start a second life"), Lucille is so sure that the note's "hard as a hatchet-chop" tone will hurt her "innocent," "romantic" father, "a man with a breakable heart," that she rewrites it to make it more emotional: "Please do not blame yourself, Warren, my love." The result is that Pop assumes Mom's been abducted: the tone's all wrong, like "*someone forced her to write*" it. Throughout the novel, Lucille is going to try to "fix" things like the note, with the same organizational energy with which she takes over the household cooking. A bit of a purist (she doesn't smoke, drink or fool around; she's tried sex with her boyfriend, but can take it or leave it), her "fixing" will show her to be something of a moral bully: she threatens her mother with the police if she doesn't come home; when she finds her father in bed with a new girlfriend, she responds, "Did they think they could carry on like that under my roof?"

Like almost all teen-agers, Lucille complains of being misunderstood, inarticulate ("what came out when I spoke was only a hacked-up version of the thoughts that lay graceful and complete in my brain"), lonely and "not normal." She locates a major source of her sense of separateness, as well as her empathy with other outsiders, in the fact that she was born with a split upper lip (surgically corrected so that no one but her even notices it). But, like Austen's Emma—another young woman who's taken charge of her father's life—Lucille makes serious mistakes because she assumes she knows much more than she really does, both about herself and about others. All her childhood, she's been in love with the virtuous, tough, "steady comfort" of her parents' love; assumed, first, that they were immune to divorce; assumed, second, that her father would never recover from her mother's "abdication." Both assumptions prove wrong.

The progress of *Rich in Love* is the progress of all its characters—most believably, Lucille—in learning to give up the shelter of old assumptions. In this painful process, Lucille falls in love with the man who "recognizes" her, who sees how rich in love she is: "You love more things than anyone I've ever run into." *Rich in Love* is most vibrant when it expresses that capacity in its narrator. Lucille is intensely attuned to the world, so aware, so quickened in her heart, that things glitter, sometimes more than she can bear: Shopping in the city overstimulates her, and "there's too much emotion for [her] in the country." Everywhere, "beauty doubled and tripled around" her. She can't take her eyes off things, sea gulls, aluminum baseball bats, gold oak pollen; she seems to see *into* things, with a sort of intrasensory perception that she calls "invision." She sees and loves the book of the world, the warm concrete of sidewalks, old junk furniture, "the myrtle hummocks brown in the lavender sage," the smell and color of a shopping bag, a firefly "fooled into . . . eternally unrequited love" for a star. Her hope for her sister's baby daughter is that she will be someone on whom nothing is lost: "What I want her to know is the strength and fragility of things, the love and the luck hidden together in the world." It's a wonderful, if not always happy, gift to possess, and a gift the gods of writing have most assuredly given Lucille's creator. □

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Freedom's Origins

WALDO E. MARTIN JR.

SLAVE CULTURE: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America. *By Sterling Stuckey. Oxford University Press. 425 pp. $27.50.*

Afro-American leaders, like their people, have always demonstrated a profound ambivalence toward the United States: They have found it impossible to identify fully with a country whose racist reality has undermined its glowing ideals and promise. Indeed, that reality has reinforced among them what W.E.B. Du Bois called a "double consciousness": "two warring ideals in one dark body." How does one reconcile being both African and American? As an oppressed "nation within a nation," how should Afro-Americans define themselves and better their condition? As Sterling Stuckey demonstrates in his powerful new book, the cultural question of self-definition and the political question of liberation are inextricably interwoven. Freedom demands an acceptance of one's true self and a willingness to act on that awareness. For many black Americans, however, notably the largely middle-class leadership, self-definition has been a continuing challenge. Far too often, they have exaggerated their Americanness only to find themselves unable to escape the prison of the larger society's negative views of Africa.

It has taken most of our century for historians to begin to come to grips with African cultures and their impact on the New World. Until fairly recently, most historians viewed culture as the exclusive province of Western societies and white peoples. Not surprisingly, therefore, early commentators—including many educated blacks—believed slavery a blessing in disguise for Africans in America, because it provided the incalculable benefits of "civilization" and Christianity. Many saw God's mysteri ous hand in the process: Through the divine interposition of slavery, transplanted Africans were allegedly saved from the twin evils of savagery and heathenism.

Ignoring the pioneering research of scholars like Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston, which points to a distinctive black culture in the United States, the historical mainstream consigned blacks to a cultural limbo: neither African nor American. Until the 1960s most historians argued that slavery effectively destroyed the slaves' African heritage and, over time, allowed their assimilation to New World values, attitudes and institutions. According to this view, the fact that Africans remained imperfectly Americanized was primarily due to their innate incapacity to adapt.

The black cultural nationalism of the 1960s, along with the growing emphasis among social historians on writing history from the bottom up, forced a reconsideration of that illogical view. Scholars began to explore the notion of a distinctive black culture, often using interdisciplinary approaches and nontraditional historical evidence such as music, dance, art, folklore and grave markings. To paraphrase the historian Eugene Genovese, the question became not What had been done to blacks, but What had they done for themselves?

One of the most influential essays in the new black history was Sterling Stuckey's "Through the Prism of Folklore: The Black Ethos in Slavery," written in 1968, which demonstrated conclusively that slave music and folk tales reflected a distinctive "life style and set of values," an amalgam of African and New World sources. This refreshing observation revealed the prevailing historical consensus to be inaccurate at best and racist at worst. Stuckey showed that the slaves were intelligent, resilient and resourceful and that they had created a rich, vibrant and sustaining culture. His article was a devastating refutation of the notion of infantilized and culturally denuded "sambos" laid out in Stanley Elkins's popular and controversial *Slavery* (1959).

Stuckey's 1968 article, Lawrence Levine's insightful *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1977) and other studies emphasize the African contribution to the cross-fertilization between African and New World roots in the development of black culture. Stuckey's provocative new book, however, like art historian Robert F. Thompson's fascinating *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (1983), goes a step further. He argues forcefully for a much more determinative African influence, as well as for the continuing importance of an Afrocentric perspective for understanding black culture in the United States. In his view, the New World environment, particularly Anglo-American culture, had much less impact on slave culture than previously assumed. Instead, New World Africans created and sustained a unique cultural vision based on a brilliant synthesis of common elements from their diverse African backgrounds. Only during the nineteenth century, with emancipation, Christianization and a measure of mobility, did large numbers of Africans begin to see themselves as American in any real sense.

A central problem Stuckey addresses is how Africans from a variety of ethnic groups, cultures and nations melded into a single people in the United States. W.E.B. Du Bois argued that the slave church and slave religious leaders were vital to this process. Stuckey elaborates on that point, demonstrating how folklore, dance, holiday and burial rituals, as well as songs—particularly spirituals—promoted pan-Africanization. Drawing on clues from Paul Robeson, he maintains that the most important ritual giving unity and meaning to this New World African culture was the ring shout, a religious song and counterclockwise dance stressing antiphony, repetition and rhythm. Stuckey's analysis of this deeply African-influenced practice is his most original and engaging argument. Extending this insight, he maintains that "the use of the circle for religious purposes in slavery was so consistent and profound that . . . it . . . gave form and meaning to black religion and art."

Stuckey's Afrocentric point of view is bound to be controversial, in both scholarly and political circles. In fact, the bulk of his text concerns the relationship between slave culture and black nationalist theory. His central argument is that black liberation must be predicated upon cultural nationalism—upon understanding and accepting not only that Afro-Americans are an African people but also that they continue to share a distinctive culture and history. This vision suggests a separatist philosophy rather than an integrationist one. Yet, as Stuckey acknowledges, these positions often overlap. For instance, many integrationists, like Frederick Douglass, have seen separatism as a useful short-term strategy in some areas. And both separatists and nationalists have differed among themselves about how separate from the white majority blacks are and should be.

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The historical failure of black intellectuals to develop their own liberation strategies based on their people's unique history and culture was trenchantly analyzed by Harold Cruse in his 1967 *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. Stuckey's contribution to this line of argument is to demonstrate how the concept of Africanness impinged upon the lives and thought of four representative nationalists: David Walker and Henry Highland Garnet in the nineteenth century, and Du Bois and Robeson in the twentieth.

Unlike Du Bois and Robeson, Walker and Garnet did not recognize the necessity of accepting slave culture on its own terms. Stuckey observes that "Walker helped establish a pattern . . . the almost total failure of most nationalists to recognize the artistic and spiritual genius of their people, a recognition essential to building on the positive and the distinctive in black culture, to blacks' estimating their cultural worth and that of the world around them." This failure was common among middle-class blacks. Indeed, this turning away from their cultural roots often set middle-class blacks apart from lower-class blacks, who were more likely to continue to embrace tradition. Socioeconomic mobility, then, tended to heighten the tensions between slave or black culture and mainstream culture, which in turn deepened the divisions between classes.

Nevertheless, a pervasive commitment to the elevation of "the race" among black leaders often obscured such differences. Walker's 1829 *Appeal*, a radical attack on white racism and black degradation and a call for slave rebellion, is a pioneering text in the nationalist tradition. Stuckey labels Walker the "father of black nationalist theory" and shows that his fierce abolitionism reflected a pan-African vision of unity and liberation. As "one of the greatest ideologists of African liberation of the nineteenth century," Walker stressed pride in blackness, respect for ancient African achievements and the need for African autonomy. A fervent Christian, he perceived the distinctiveness of black Christianity, if not of slave culture.

Garnet's *Address to the Slaves of the United States*, delivered in 1843, was also a powerful call for slaves to revolt, advocating violence as spiritually and psychologically—as well as tactically—necessary. Like Du Bois and Robeson, this influential Presbyterian minister and political abolitionist preached that educated blacks should dedicate themselves to their people's liberation rather than self-aggrandizement. His antimaterialism was part of a protosocialist strain in the thinking of the early nationalists, who were extremely critical of capitalism's inhumanity.

This incipient socialism reached its full strength with Du Bois and Robeson, who also linked the domestic struggle of U.S. blacks to liberation struggles worldwide, especially in the Third World. Stuckey provides an illuminating view of how both men reconciled their internationalist and black nationalist positions and shows that their political radicalism and broad cultural awareness went hand in hand. Their pan-Africanism broadened into both Negritude—"the belief that people of African ancestry have spiritual, artistic, and psychological qualities that distinguish them from Europeans"—and support for postwar African liberation movements. What's more, both men responded affirmatively to the challenge of slave culture. By dealing with that culture on its own terms, they established the necessary links between Africa and Afro-America and laid the basis for the achievement of true self- and collective awareness and full freedom. Although their Communist commitments undermined their leadership in the postwar United States, they both found other ways to continue their work. Stuckey's convincing resuscitation of Robeson as an important historical figure is particularly moving and badly needed.

A book as rich and thoughtful as this inevitably sparks questions. Some readers will want to know why there is no discussion of recent black nationalist theorists such as Amiri Baraka, or certain earlier ones, especially Marcus Garvey, or of the role of black women, such as Zora Neale Hurston. On another level, while Stuckey's Afrocentric perspective is generally persuasive, it underestimates the impact of the New World environment on African acculturation. Albert Raboteau and Levine have shown, for example, that spirituals often represented a filtering of Christian hymns and ideas through the slaves' own ethos. The slaves so profoundly remade these sacred songs into their own that what emerged, through a process Levine describes as "improvisational communal consciousness," was a new cultural form.

Too much emphasis on origins, African or otherwise, can be misleading. The distinctiveness of black culture often had as much, if not more, to do

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with how blacks themselves transformed cultural forms out of the wellsprings of their own experiences. Stuckey similarly underestimates the possible importance of patterns of parallel cultural evolution, where similar forms came together and reinforced one another. Levine, for instance, observes that the European practice of lining-out hymns easily merged with the African practice of call-and-response. Likewise, Stuckey's emphasis on the significance of the circle in black culture recalls Jung's argument that the circle, as the symbol of wholeness and unity, occurs in religions and societies worldwide.

Stuckey might also have given greater attention to shifts and changes in black culture over time. His decision not to examine how black culture evolved after emancipation becomes increasingly problematic when his work ranges beyond the era of slave culture. We need to know not only what happened to slave culture but more about the process of Afro-Americanization during and after slavery. When, how and with what consequences do Africans become Afro-Americans? How does one explain the cultural differences between antebellum slaves and free blacks as well as postbellum lower- and middle-class blacks? A number of historians, including Stuckey, have pointed to ethnic origin, amount of contact with whites, conversion to Christianity and work routine as factors. Within Stuckey's analysis, however, more attention might have been paid to the impact of mastering English on black acculturation—as can be found in Peter Wood's *Black Majority* (1974) and Gerald Mullin's *Flight and Rebellion* (1972).

While an understanding of slave culture is clearly important for developing viable nationalist theories, an understanding of the changing cultural circumstances of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Afro-America seems equally essential—especially in discussing Robeson and Du Bois. A critical aspect of Martin Luther King Jr.'s triumph, for example, was his ability to tap into black (and American) religious culture—its ethos and institutional structure—as a foundation for mobilizing and sustaining a community-based civil rights movement. Likewise, an important measure of Jesse Jackson's success will be his ability to draw on that same religious culture.

But the nagging question of how best to achieve black liberation persists. Given that an emigrant or separatist solution seems most unlikely, any strategy, nationalist or otherwise, must deal with the fundamental Americanness of Afro-Americans. Stuckey's stimulating work clearly suggests that until Afro-Americans can resolve not only the problems of economic and political empowerment but also the related problem of cultural self-definition—especially as regards their Africanness—the travail of black liberation will not come to an end. □

LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 362*)

death with dignity, a 1985 Gallup poll found that the elderly are significantly *less* willing than younger age groups to support laws making possible the withholding of life-extending treatment. That result came despite nearly two decades of discussion of the topic in the United States. There is, in any case, no good evidence that more choice on the part of the elderly would significantly reduce health-care costs, however valuable that would be for the dignity of the elderly.

Second, every developed country in the world—including those which have national health insurance, much lower medical salaries and greater control of corporate profits—is having the same problem we are with health-care costs for the elderly. It is considered a special crisis in Japan. The British have succeeded as well as anyone in controlling costs, but they do so by denying expensive high-technology care of most kinds to the elderly (e.g., no dialysis, in general, after age 55) and through an explicit policy bias in favor of long-term and at-home care rather than life-extending care, a tradeoff we need to pursue.

Third, we have made no progress *whatever* in the past decade in this country in reducing health-care costs. Intensified care for the elderly is a major, and demonstrated, reason for the high cost of care, accounting for about 25 percent of the annual increase in costs over and above inflation. I see no reason to believe that situation will change in the future. What will bring about the change?

I have tried to respond to all these issues in much greater detail in my new book, *Setting Limits: Medical Goals in an Aging Society* (Simon & Schuster), from which my *Nation* article was excerpted. Above all in that book, I try to make clear that we need to do much more for the aged in our society. I do not believe in a "duty to die." I do believe that the elderly should live active and useful lives as long as they can. That goal is not, however, incompatible with a recognition that, sooner or later, we must set limits on the potentially infinite amount of money that could be spent to stave off death among the elderly. It is good neither for them nor for the rest of us. *Daniel Callahan*

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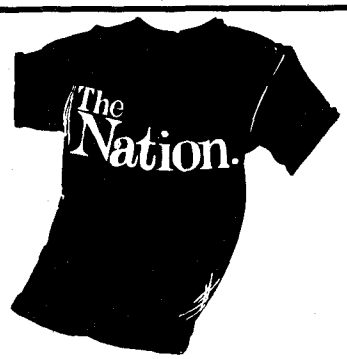

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A	■	N	■	A	■	O	■	A	■	U	■	N	■	P
U	T	T	E	R	■	S	A	I	N	T	P	A	U	L
R	■	A	■	V	■	E	■	N	■	W	■	V	■	A
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L	■	G	■	R	■	■	■	I	■	A	■	■	■	I
A	I	L	E	D	■	S	O	V	E	R	E	I	G	N
N	■	E	■	■	■	L	■	E	■	■	■	N	■	G
D	I	S	A	L	L	O	W	S	■	C	H	A	F	F
H	■	■	■	E	■	W	■	■	■	O	■	M	■	O
A	N	C	I	E	N	T	■	C	O	N	T	O	U	R
R	■	A	■	R	■	R	■	R	■	N	■	R	■	T
D	A	L	A	I	L	A	M	A	■	I	R	A	Q	I
Y	■	E	■	N	■	I	■	B	■	N	■	T	■	M
■	■	B	A	G	A	N	D	B	A	G	G	A	G	E

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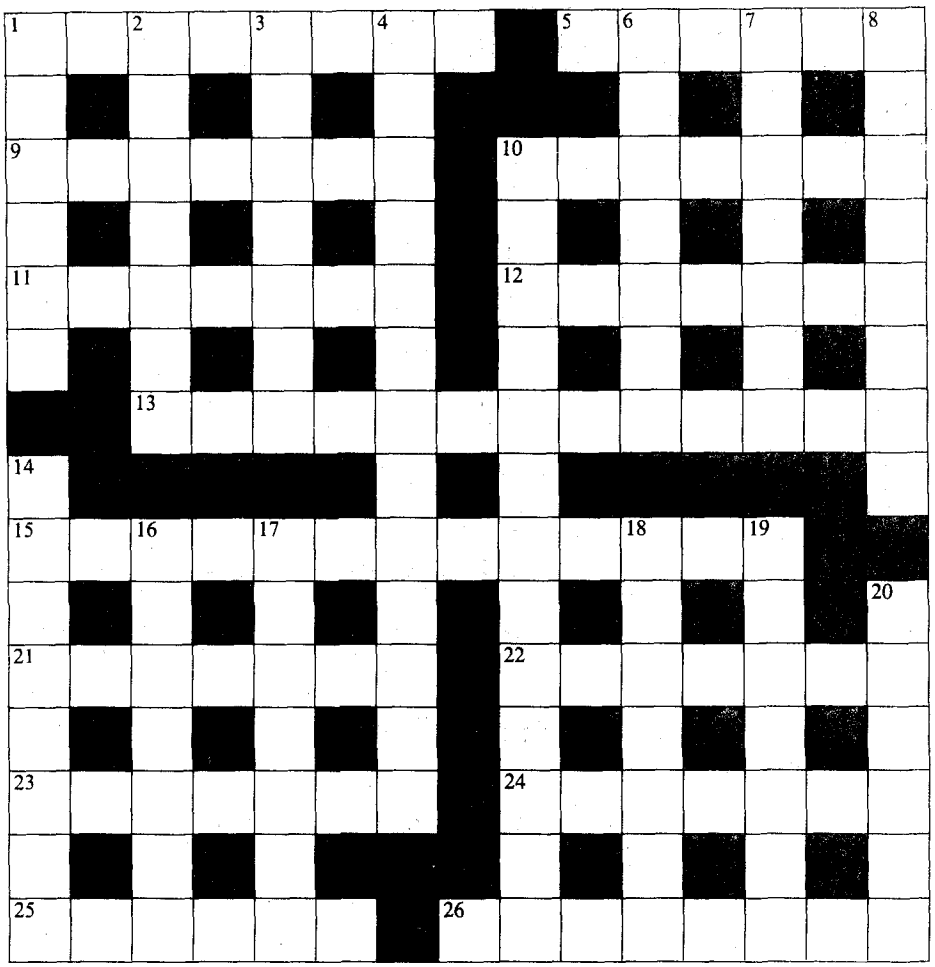

ACROSS

1 and 5 You might get to see fees for cops made the hard way—especially in Italian bars. (8,6)
9 Cover what might be spoken of coarse tobacco? (7)
10 Some holds barred if you do at college. (7)
11 Tall buildings might be like the old things they wrote about. (7)
12 Part of the travail men talk about? Doctors might work with it. (7)
13 Not the one who composes the London *Times* puzzle—a real dog! (7,6)
14 Describing the man who was sort of vain? (8)
15 E.g., not the short form. (7,6)
16 Completely enclose, and even (in a way) cut off something. (7)
17 A large basket is part of the get-up Annie requires. (7)
18 Grave markings, perhaps, and toil with some difficulty around such a place. (7)
19 From the Year One, sit, perhaps, and just get fat! (7)
20 Stones that come up with a furtive confederate, properly (but briefly) speaking. (6)
21 The internal kind might tax us somewhat. (7)
22 Take advantage of an upper-class old-school association about Miss Taylor, perhaps. (7)
23 Clubs associated with law enforcement types and such as Miss Burke. (7)
24 It relates to the interaction of organisms and their environment. (7)
25 and 26 They shouldn't take in much trade here. (6,8)

DOWN

1 A miss at school might require one from home. (7)
2 Put a little energy on the pitch—the intake is tranformed into it. (7)
3 Making a mistake about a hanger-on, if you want aural embellishment. (7)
4 They don't necessarily make a bloc of voters, however firm they appear to stand. (5,8)
6 People who want the truth may get upset this way. (If something does, it's placed in a superior position.) (7)
7 Most descriptive of survivors, as they say. (7)
8 Their college is somewhat out of date, but that's what many 4 down want to be. (8)
10 It might tell you which way the wind is blowing! (7,6)
14 Describing the man who was sort of vain? (8)
16 Completely enclose, and even (in a way) cut off something. (7)
17 A large basket is part of the get-up Annie requires. (7)
18 Grave markings, perhaps, and toil with some difficulty around such a place. (7)
19 From the Year One, sit, perhaps, and just get fat! (7)
20 Stones that come up with a furtive confederate, properly (but briefly) speaking. (6)

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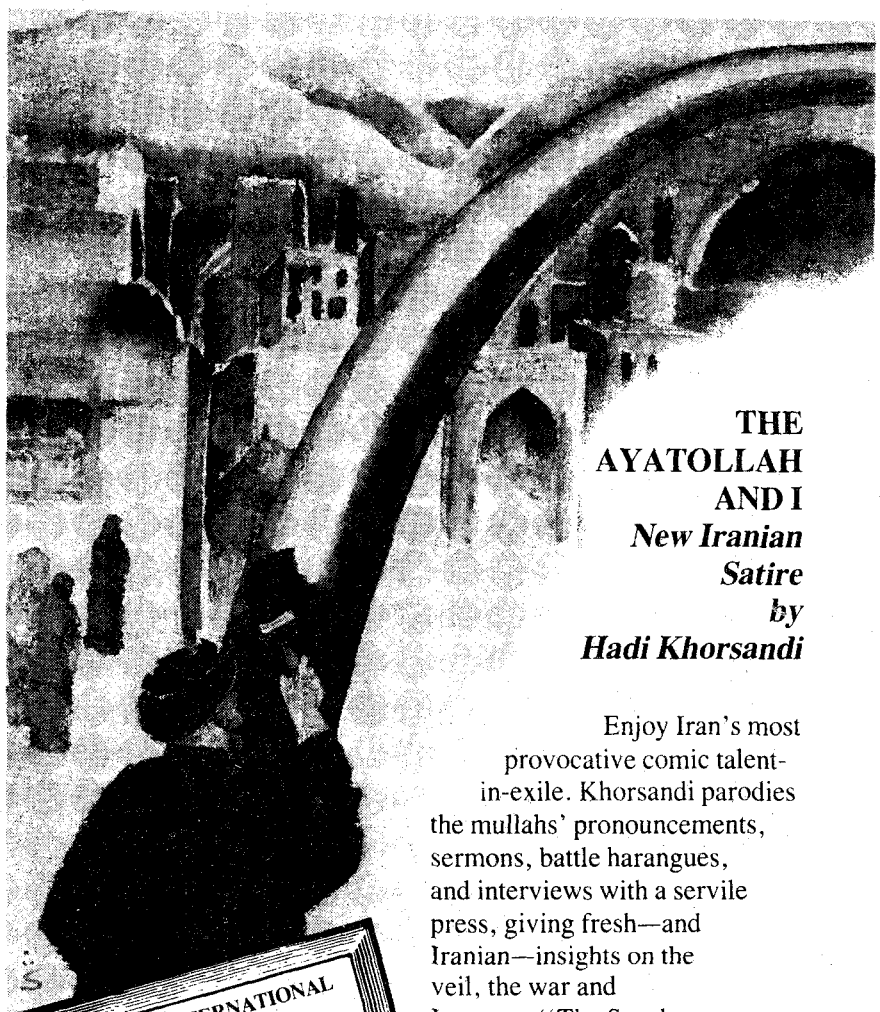

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